

Feminist pedagogy and reproductive rights.



Camilla Fitzsimons

Supervisor: Dr Catherine Lawless

Submitted in part-fulfilment of the Masters in Gender and Women's Studies (2021-2022), Trinity College, Dublin.

Prologue

12th January 2022

I was surprised how nervous I was. I've been working in adult education for over twenty years. Yes I was a bit thrown by the recent pivot online, but I'd like to think I can hold my own when teaching virtually.

I couldn't taste my dinner. Seven o'clock was creeping closer and I needed to get started. I knew that the topic was part of my nervousness, my first ever online class on reproductive rights. 'I know my stuff' I thought, 'it's been my passion project for the last 3 years and I've been an activist for much longer'. But running this course was different. This was my self-initiated re-branding as an 'academic-activist' - two identities that I used to separate out from each other that I'm now trying to collide into one.

I struggled through a tasteless dinner, locked myself in the front room and logged on. All was going well until - disaster - my internet crashed with no sign of reconnection. No amount of hollering at the offending icon, or imploring with a higher power were working. I was not getting back online. On the night when it mattered the most to me, and for the first time since the pandemic began, I had been kicked out of my own class leaving 14 activists to fend for themselves.

Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks to the participants of the online Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Justice programme that this research centres around. Thanks to staff in Trinity College especially my supervisor Dr Catherine Lawless. I always knew you were there to offer advice, support and guidance. Big shout-out and thanks to my classmates on the Masters in Gender and Women's studies. I enjoyed being a student again and learned lots from our chats both in class and over coffee and in our most helpful WhatsApp group.

The cover photo I have used is by [Colin Lloyd](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Abstract

At the heart of this research is an online, four week, **Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Justice** course that was designed and delivered specifically for this study. This research tells the story of this course including its significance during a historical time when reproductive rights are under attack across the globe and when reproductive oppressions persist in Ireland despite a significant relaxation in legal obstacles since 2018. Primary findings are drawn from the insights of activists who completed the programme and who opted-in to accompanying research allowing me to draw directly from pre and post anonymous questionnaires. Overall I assess the role of *feminist pedagogy* in creating a more just society where reproductive oppressions are eradicated.

The study is qualitative and methodologically draws from feminist critical theory and autoethnography. Given the contested nature of many of the concepts I use, it articulates my understanding of *feminist pedagogy* and presents the work through a Reproductive Justice Framework to unpack a specific research question on the ways feminist pedagogy can inform, support and equip reproductive rights activists.

Contents

Prologue.....	2
Abstract.....	4
Chapter 1 – Introducing the research and exploring concepts that underpin the study.....	7
1.1 Why do we still need a reproductive rights movement in Ireland?	8
1.2 The focus of my inquiry.....	10
1.2.1 Infusing myself in the study.....	11
1.3 What is a Reproductive Justice Framework?	12
1.4 What is Feminist Pedagogy?	13
1.5 My version of feminism.	16
1.6 Outline of thesis.....	20
Chapter 2 – Doing feminist research.	21
2.1 Understanding qualitative social research.....	21
2.1.1. Feminist research and social change.	22
2.2 A case study research design.	23
2.2.1 Recruiting participants.....	24
2.3 Infusing myself in the study	26
2.3.1 My research diary.	28
2.4 Research ethics.	29
2.4.1 Ensuring informed consent.....	29
2.4.2 Maintaining participant confidentiality	30
2.5 Analysing data.....	30
2.6 Research limitations.....	31
Chapter 3 – Creating a ‘feminist’ classroom.....	33
3.1 Co-creating a curriculum.....	34
3.2 Preparing for a learning community	37
Chapter 4 – ‘Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Justice’ - programme delivery.....	40
4.1 Session 1; Building community and introducing theory	40
4.2 More about the work that we do (session 2).	45
4.3 Trans rights are human rights (session 3).....	48
4.4 Summary overview and (real) productive rights (Final session).....	51
Chapter 5 – Impacts, insights and ways forward.....	54
5.1 Participant thoughts on my feminist pedagogy.....	55
5.2 Articulating core principles of critical feminist-pedagogy.....	57
5.3 Reflection on my own learning from the process.....	59
5.4 Conclusion.....	60

Bibliography	61
Appendix 1 – Flier advertising the course.....	67
Appendix 2 – Information and Consent form	68
Appendix 3 - Pre-course questionnaire	69
Appendix 4 – Post course questionnaire.	70
Appendix 5 – PowerPoint used for session 1.....	71
Appendix 6 – Excerpt from group chat during a session (with pseudonyms)	75
Appendix 7 - PowerPoint used in session 2	76
Appendix 8 – PowerPoint used in session 3	77
Appendix 9 – PowerPoint used in session 4	79

List of tables.

Table 1 – Overview of participants for the online programme.....	26
Table 2 - Lesson plan session 1	39
Table 3 - Group agreement	41
Table 4 - Email correspondence following session 1.....	43
Table 5 - Lesson plan session 2	45
Table 7 - Post session communication and materials week 2	47
Table 8 - Lesson plan week 3	49
Table 9- Follow up materials session 3.....	51
Table 10 - Final email communication and resources	53

Chapter 1 – Introducing the research and exploring concepts that underpin the study.

Because of better reproductive healthcare, my life is radically different than the life of my mother. She had ten children, I had three. My daughters lives are in many ways unrecognisable from my own experience. Sexual activity from their teenage years is now normal, regardless of the genders involved, and contraception and abortion are free and available on demand; something unimaginable in the Ireland I grew up in. This isn't to say that this will always be the case in fact there is a growing global backlash to the availability of abortion and contraception most obviously evidenced through the reversal of Roe v Wade in June 2022; a 1973 US Supreme Court ruling that gave constitutional protection through the right to privacy. Reversing Roe, was one of many recent regressive changes where the rationale is typically underpinned by moralistic, often Christian ideology. This is despite unproblematic evidence of abortions in the historical texts of Judaism, some versions of Islamic doctrine and Catholicism (Kissling, 2017, p. 1). There are religious undertows to the suspension of contraceptive programmes in colleges and workplaces in the US (Chuang & Weisman, 2019, pp. 993-4), the prohibition of sexual and reproductive rights in Brazil (Reis Brandão & Cristiane, 2019, p 76) and the stealthy, highly restrictive encroachment of reproductive rights in Poland (Kacpura, 2018, pp. 26-7). These and other similar backsliding reforms are part of an ongoing battle for reproductive rights, an arena Ricki Solinger (2005, p. 3) describes as *reproductive politics* that relate to “who has power over pregnancy and its consequences”.

Although ‘reproductive politics’ are an important part of the conceptual framework I present in this thesis, this isn't the research's central emphasis. The focus of this qualitative inquiry is *pedagogic*, a term that typically describes the process of teaching and learning. Specifically the research asks,

In what ways can an inclusive, feminist pedagogy inform, support and equip reproductive rights activists as they seek to preserve and improve reproductive rights.

The activists I refer to form part of a decades old and still growing international social movement whose emphasis is on securing better reproductive rights. I interpret a social movement as a dense network of interactions between individuals, groups and organisations that share a collective identity and that are in conflict with a clearly defined opponent or opponents (Della Porta and Diani, 2010, pp. 20-4). Della Porta and Diani (2010, p. 20) maintain,

Social movement actors are engaged in political and/or cultural conflicts meant to promote or oppose social change. By conflict we mean an oppositional relationship between actors who seek control of the same stake – be it political, economic, or cultural power – and in the process make negative claims on each other – i.e., demands which, if realized, would damage the interests of the other actors.

Social movements, are not just the sum of protest events on certain issues, rather “a social movement process is in place only when collective identities develop, which go beyond specific events and initiatives” (Della Porta and Diani, 2010, p. 21).

1.1 Why do we still need a reproductive rights movement in Ireland?

On the face of it, it can seem like Ireland is moving in the opposite direction than the international examples outlined thus far. In 2022, free contraception was made widely available for women aged 17-25yrs, a move arguably linked to more progressive attitudes that stemmed from the 2018 removal of a constitutional near-ban on abortion called the ‘eighth amendment’ that had been introduced through a referendum in 1983.¹

The history behind this constitutional clause is important as there are many similarities between its origins, and the regressive reforms that are happening today. The eighth amendment was inserted because a highly resourced, well organised, anti-abortion Catholic-led conservative movement successfully lobbied government parties to introduce a ban as part of wider actions to stave off a broader secularisation of Irish society (Fitzsimons and Kennedy, 2021, pp. 54-5). Despite concern from the Attorney General that the clause would inevitably lead to confusion and uncertainty (Collins, 2018, n/p), the wording introduced into the Irish constitution stated,

The state acknowledges the right to life of the unborn and, with due regard to the equal right to life of the mother, guarantees in its laws to respect, and as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate that right.

These 43 words had a profoundly negative impact on the status of women. In her analysis of the failures of the eighth, Ivana Bacik (2013, p. 385) describes the amendment as “uniquely

¹ One of the ancillary recommendations of the citizen’s assembly established in 2016 to examine the need for a referendum on the eighth amendment recommended free contraception. This and other recommendations was welcomed by a cross-party Oireachtas working group in 2017 (Fitzsimons, 2021, p. 165)

misogynistic, in that it expressly sets up the right to life of both the pregnant woman and the foetus that she carries in conflict – anticipating that a time would come when somebody would have to decide between them”. This didn’t confine itself to reproductive politics rather “what transpired was an environment where the Eighth Amendment gave permission for misogyny to express itself as a national standard. It acted as a cultural marker of contempt, reminding women, lest they forget, that their place was within the monogamous domestic realm” (Fitzsimons and Kennedy, 2021, p. 59).

It took 35-years, an extensive grassroots campaign and another referendum for the Irish electorate to remove this constitutional clause by a two to one majority and, in January 2019, the *Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act 2018* introduced legal abortion services on demand. Abortion was also decriminalised in Northern Ireland in 2019 making it legally available across the island of Ireland for the first time. However, although things are undoubtedly better, many restrictions remain. Abortion is still criminalised in the Republic of Ireland meaning it is only allowed within strict parameters. These include a gestational limit of 12-weeks, a mandatory 3-day wait, where conscientious objection for a healthcare worker is prioritised over patient rights and, in cases of foetal anomaly, where a minimum of two doctors can certifiably guarantee a baby would die within 28 days of birth. All of these restrictions are contrary to best practice advice by the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2022). Although the law in Northern Ireland contains less restrictions, services are yet to be fully commissioned mostly because of ongoing political obstruction in Stormont (Carroll, 2022, n/p). As a result of these barriers, people continue to travel overseas for reproductive healthcare although not in the same numbers as before. The most recent statistics on England and Wales relating to 2020 measure 565 people giving an address from Ireland; almost one third of which relate to foetal abnormality (UK Government, 2021, n/p). Back home, only 10 percent of GPs are openly prescribing abortion pills and only 10 of Ireland’s 19 maternity services are offering full abortion services (Kennedy 2021, pp. 21-2). Together, these restrictions have resulted in a situation where many people are still locked out of abortion services. As legal expert and member of Lawyers for Choice Fiona De Londras maintains,

The law that emerged from these victories left many behind, especially those for whom multiple marginalities intersect to make domestic abortion travel difficult if not impossible, those whose gender presentation does not match a ‘female’ marker assigned at birth, those with reduced access (for mobility or other reasons) to transportation and healthcare, and those racialised by both the containment practices of Irish refugee and immigration law and the persistent partition of the island of Ireland. (2020, p. 126)

These restrictions, alongside ongoing limitations in accessing reproductive healthcare worldwide (Guttmacher Institute, 2022, n/p), have resulted in a situation where many people who campaigned to change Irish laws remain active today (Fitzsimons, 2021, pp. 176-187).

1.2 The focus of my inquiry

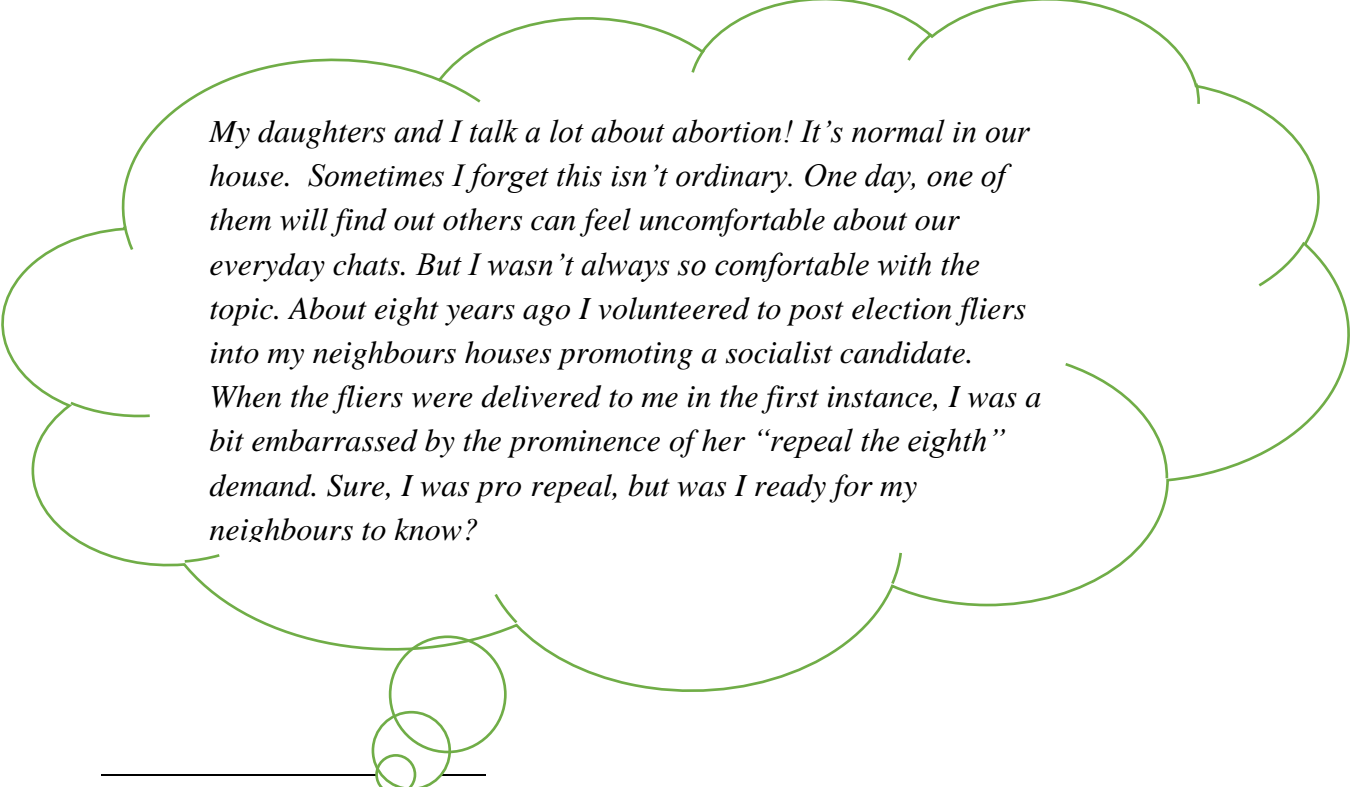
This study seeks to explore the role activist education can play in seeking to create a world where people can exercise their full reproductive rights. Studying education within social movements is not new in fact I have previously published on the role of critical education amidst the original campaign to repeal the eighth amendment (Fitzsimons, 2022, pp. 6-11). This thesis is different not only because it focuses on activism post repeal, but because it is collaborative and action based. Fourteen activists self-selected to complete a four-week, online education course called *Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Justice* (see appendix 1). I designed this course, in collaboration with these activists solely for the purposes of this study. It was delivered between January 12th and February 2nd, 2022.

As well as weekly participation, ten of these activists provided anonymous feedback on a range of themes including their motivations for getting involved, their hopes and fears about participation, the contents they hoped would be included and, in the aftermath, any tangible impacts on their activism. Further information on data collection and analysis is provided in chapter 2 and findings are principally presented in chapters 3-5. This early excerpt from a pre-course anonymous questionnaire gives you a sense of one person’s motivation.

Although I have been interested and relatively active in campaigning for Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Justice, I have not had any formal education or training in the field. I hope to leave this course with a better understanding of the difficulties faced by people and why, how I can provide more support, and work on making systemic changes.

1.2.1 Infusing myself in the study.

The research also draws from aspects of autoethnographic, a methodology Ellis, Adams, and Bochner, (2011, p. 273) describe as “an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience”. Autoethnography challenges traditional approaches to research that principally rely on interpreting the words of a researched ‘other’. I include personal epiphanies, made possible because of my own role within reproductive politics (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 275), in the main through my membership of The Abortion Rights Campaign (ARC)², a volunteer-led organisation open to all genders and that acts as a catalyst for change through social disobedience, lobbying, campaigning and consciousness-raising. I am also a full-time tenured senior academic whose disciplinary specialism is Adult and Community Education meaning I have extensive experience facilitating adult learning groups. By sharing these glimpses of my ‘self’ others may benefit from hearing about my vulnerabilities, despite this teaching and activist experience. These autoethnographic tendencies go hand in glove with my efforts to break from an increasingly critiqued academic trend of “writing ‘outside’ or ourselves” (Richards and Miller, 2005, p. 180). Richards and Miller (2005) encourage us to resist practices that render ourselves invisible and take risks that reveal our inextricable relationship with what we are writing so our readers might sense the person behind the words (pp. 184-5).



My daughters and I talk a lot about abortion! It's normal in our house. Sometimes I forget this isn't ordinary. One day, one of them will find out others can feel uncomfortable about our everyday chats. But I wasn't always so comfortable with the topic. About eight years ago I volunteered to post election fliers into my neighbours houses promoting a socialist candidate. When the fliers were delivered to me in the first instance, I was a bit embarrassed by the prominence of her "repeal the eighth" demand. Sure, I was pro repeal, but was I ready for my neighbours to know?

² I have been involved with ARC in a variety of roles since 2015. ARC allowed me to use their zoom account to deliver the programme. In return, I will provide them with the materials I designed.

1.3 What is a Reproductive Justice Framework?

Abortion has been happening for as long as people have been getting pregnant and is relatively commonplace. The Guttmacher Institute (2022a, n/p) reports as many as 24 percent of US women will have had an abortion by age 45yrs, 59 percent of who are mothers. Exercising bodily autonomy in this way has allowed millions of people to decide when and with whom to have children if at all. It has allowed women in particular to pursue life goals otherwise denied, to counter decades of discrimination in terms of their social and economic progress and to manage their care burden. However, around 23, 000 women and girls die each year from unsafe abortions worldwide because 41 percent (or 700 million) live under restrictive laws (Centre for Reproductive Rights, 2021, n/p).

The *Reproductive Justice Framework* that underpins this study was first formulated in the US in the 1990s by Women of African Descent for Reproductive Justice (now SisterSong). Reproductive Justice (RJ) merges ‘reproductive rights’ with ‘social justice’ and focuses on three expansive rights—the right not to have children through birth control, abortion or abstinence; the right to have children under the conditions we choose, and the right to parent in safe, healthy environments, all alongside sexual and gender freedom (Ross et al. 2017, p. 171). Reproductive Justice is about addressing the factors that make a person vulnerable to pressures that influence reproductive decision-making for example financial poverty, heavy care loads, the impact of borders, and/or the precarious nature of their employment or housing. It unambiguously calls for the dismantling of a capitalist-led carceral state that reinforces structural inequality and over-polices racialised bodies taking it far beyond the single issue of abortion and towards these wider dimensions of reproductive oppressions many people endure (for complete works exploring RJ see Siliman et al. 2004; Briggs 2017; Ross and Solinger 2017). Ireland’s constitutional ban on abortion certainly affected everyone who could get pregnant, but few acknowledged its greatest impact was on those without money or papers to travel and those prevented from leaving their homes because of coercion and/or heavy care burdens. This perspective directly collides with many aspects of *liberal feminism*, which underestimates or even ignores power relations such as class, geopolitics, and race as it pursues individualised feminist ambitions within existing economic and political social structures (Rothenberg, 2018, p. 48; Arruzza, Bhattacharya, and Fraser, 2019, pp. 2-3). Much Irish feminism is liberal in orientation as it focuses on the lives of privileged women over working-class women and largely excludes the experiences of Mincéir and disabled women.

1.4 What is Feminist Pedagogy?

Ireland has a history of bringing women together for the express purpose of educating them so voices and experiences that were previously excluded could be validated and celebrated. ‘Women’s community education’ (WCE) groups mushroomed across Ireland from the 1980s onwards creating spaces for “women to see themselves as active participants in Irish society, women who might otherwise, through socialisation, perceive themselves as operating within the private sphere only” (Connolly, 2001, p, 1). In 2009, AONTAS, Ireland’s National Adult Learning Organisation, described WCE as “for women to become aware of their inequality and to be critical of an unequal society” continuing “WCE is about providing women with the space to see the world in a different way and to offer women opportunities to understand the reasons underlying their experiences of the world that have been shaped by an unequal society where women come second to men” and suggest, “this work is undertaken to help create equal conditions for women to realise their full potential and, where there are blocks to that occurring, those blocks are analysed as to how they prevent women’s equality.”

There is little doubt but that educational spaces should be safe, supportive and politicising and that women have been disproportionately excluded from many social settings. Moreover, much women’s community education emerged because of a disconnect with liberal feminism and the lives of many ordinary women (2017, p, 79). However, there are problems with siphoning off women in a way that presumes a female experience and a universalised *woman* that “constitutes the subject for whom political representation is pursued” (Butler, 1990, p. 2). As Anne Ryan (2001, p. 70) points out,

Any pedagogy that suggests that women should be isolated in a women-centred environment is problematic. Theoretically it is unacceptable, because it is based on difference. Strategically it is unacceptable because it would isolate women ... politically it is unacceptable, because it maintains male/female dualism.

This is the basis upon which I articulate an inclusive, feminist pedagogy. Although the expression *pedagogy* is sometimes reduced to the style an educator adopts, this thesis will explain how its academic foundations are more than the superficial choices an educator makes in creating and delivering a programme.

As is the case with feminism, there is no one way of interpreting education meaning feminist pedagogy has emerged from a variety of philosophical trajectories. These include the progressive models of education principally associated with John Dewey (Sullivan, 2001, pp.

133-156) and humanistic, self-directed, individualist models (Belenky et al., 1986) that readily align with liberal feminism. The WCE described above was often influenced by humanistic perspectives, a school of thought heavily influenced by psychology and principally characterised by the assumption that everyone has the potential to achieve great things once ‘the self’ at the core of their being is nurtured (Rogers, 1989, p. 339). The role of the educator, is to support each individual’s separate development so they are better equipped to become engaged citizens. As Cornelius-White, (2007, p. 113) explains,

The classical [humanist] approach emphasizes teacher empathy (understanding), unconditional positive regard (warmth), genuineness (self-awareness), nondirectivity (student-initiated and student-regulated activities) and the encouragement of critical thinking (as opposed to traditional memory emphasis).

There are aspects of humanistic ways of doing amidst my own philosophy of practice. But the most influential school of thought is emancipatory education, or ‘critical pedagogy’ as it is often termed. Where humanism seeks to nurture ‘the self’, critical pedagogy revolves around a challenge to this very notion arguing each of us are in fact “*unfree* and inhibit a world rife with contradictions and asymmetries of power and privilege” (McLaren 2009, p. 61, italics in original). The most influential theorist associated with critical pedagogy is the Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire whose seminal text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (penned in the 1950s/60s and translated into English in 1970) criticises individualist approaches to education claiming the idea that a person can improve their life chances by ‘self-actualising’ is not only mythical, but is a deliberate tactic in maintaining the status quo (Freire 1972, p. 116). Freire challenges what he coined ‘a banking approach to education’, which bell hooks (1994, p. 5) describes as “based on the assumption that memorizing information and regurgitating it represented gaining knowledge that could be deposited, stored and used at a later date”. Banking, or depository approaches to education are familiar to most people as they continue to dominate many schools and colleges. These are environments where seemingly passive learners ingest a dominant fixed knowledge that is fed to them by the ‘expert’ educator be they a school teacher, a university lecturer, or a workplace instructor. Opponents argue much of the ‘knowledge’ that is imparted is little more than a set of west-centric ideas packaged in a way that obscures or excludes the histories and experiences of large swaths of people including women, people of colour, working class people, migrants, and others who experience the sharp edge of structural inequality. As a result, much canonical knowledge is biased towards the normative nature of whiteness (hooks, 1994, pp. 35-36; 2010, pp. 23-28), sexist in its exclusion of women’s voices (Brooks, 2006, p. 56) and classist in its exclusion of the everyday

experiences of working class communities (Wrigley, 2017, p. 539). Even within the seemingly neutral disciplines of maths and science, bell hooks (2010, p. 49) claims scientifically verifiable truths are themselves simply stories; interpretations of certain sets of data that are easily replaced with other truths when a new set of data is presented.

As an alternative, Freire (1972; 1994), hooks (1994; 2010) and other critical pedagogues propose a problem-posing approach and were many voices, and not just the voice of the educator are dominant and where such phenomena as poverty, sexism, racism and ableism are explicitly brought to the fore, not as individual issues affecting certain people but as structurally caused and maintained for the benefit of the few. Across her trilogy of texts specific to critical pedagogy,³ and indeed much of her feminist writings, bell hooks repeatedly encourages educators to create learning communities where students problematise dominant capitalist discourse in particular the free-market principles of *neoliberalism* a socio-economic arrangement that prioritises market-wellbeing over everything else (Arruzza, Bhattacharya, and Fraser, 2019 pp. 16-25). As Danielle Currier (2020, p. 343) maintains,

Feminist pedagogy is not just about women, although its primary focus started as the inclusion and empowerment of women and women's experiences in education, both as individuals and a group. It is also about human relationships and offers ways to analyze and challenge the various interlocking inequalities and systems of oppression present in all institutions, specifically education.

Although much feminist pedagogy is closely aligned with critical pedagogy, its own origins can't be separated from significant failures within the broader philosophy of critical pedagogy. In other words how the 'accepted truths' of critical pedagogy were produced and legitimated amidst conditions where women were subordinated. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) Freire draws solely from a male interpretation of the world and only describes men's realities. bell hooks writes "there has never been a moment when reading Freire that I have not remained aware of not only the sexism of the language but the way he ... constructs a phallogocentric paradigm of liberation — wherein freedom and the experience of patriarchal manhood are always linked as though they are one and the same" (hooks, 1992, p. 147). She describes this as "always a source of anguish for it represents a blind spot in the vision of men who have profound insight". The *engaged pedagogy* hooks articulates across her writings have "taken

³ These are *Teaching to Transgress* (1994), *Teaching Community, a pedagogy of hope* (2003) and *Teaching Critical Thinking, Practical Wisdom* (2010).

the threads of Paulo's work" (hooks, 1994, p. 52) and woven these into a more appropriate philosophy because, she argues, the omissions in Freire's writings should not overshadow our capacity to learn from critical pedagogic and how his own philosophical orientation invites such criticism:

Freire's sexism is indicated by the language in his early works notwithstanding that there is so much that remains liberatory. There is no need to apologize for the sexism. Freire's own model of critical pedagogy invites a critical interrogation of this flaw in the work. But critical interrogation is not the same as dismissal. It is feminist thinking that empowers me to engage in a constructive critique of Freire's work. (hooks, 1992, pp. 147-148)

Sue Jackson (1997) is less sympathetic arguing that although his earlier work can be excused as typical of the time, Freire continued to claim universality even after admitting to gender-blindness. This, Jackson (1997, p. 464) maintains demonstrates a failure to sufficiently address differences in the specificity of people's lives continuing "it may not be possible to argue for a Pedagogy of the Oppressed without considering how the oppressed can also be oppressors. Oppressed men, for instance, still oppress women; oppressed white women still oppress black women and so on". Anne Ryan (2001, p. 67) equally accuses him of sliding over "contradictions and tensions within social settings in which overlapping forms of oppression exist" (Ryan, 2001, p. 67).

1.5 My version of feminism.

As can likely be gleaned thus far, a person's interpretation of *feminist pedagogy* centrally revolves on their interpretation of feminism – an articulation that is not an easy task. I first formally studied feminism in the 1990s as part of a post-graduate programme in 'Adult and Community Education' and at a time when feminism was presented on a singular historical metaphor of 'waves'. Only one movement was possible at any given time with the most recent 'wave' being seen as superior to that which came before it. Influential so-called 'second wave' scholars I was introduced to included Simone De Beauvoir (1949), Betty Freidan, (2010[1964]) and Ann Oakley (1972). These women interrupted much, mostly Freudian, psychoanalytic logic that viewed 'masculinity' and 'femininity' as fixed and universal by refashioning the dominant discourse to a socialisation theory where one's 'gender' was conceived of as socially constructed, subjective and changing (Ryan, 2001, p. 28). Many revered 'second-wave'

feminist texts were widely shared within Ireland's Women's Liberation Movement (Stopper, 2006, p. 26).

There are problems with the notion of a homogenous 'second wave' because there are significant differences in the political ambitions of feminisms (see Nicolson, 2010; Browne, 2014 for discussion). Although I somewhat resist neatly categorising my own feminism, the ideological outlook I gravitate towards draws from certain tenets of Marxism. Broadly speaking, Marxism contends capital (or wealth) principally grows through the exploitation of labour. If the only capital a person has is their capacity to work, capitalism demands they sell this labour to property/business owners who then profit from this arrangement (Marx and Engels, 2018[1848], p. 10). In the late 1800s, the status of women was most succinctly expressed by Friedrich Engels in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* which was first published in 1884. Engels argued that the birth of modern capitalism initially increased productivity in male-spheres (particularly agriculture) giving men new economic power over women which allowed for their systematic oppression (Holborow, 2020, p. 11). Part of this oppression was to uphold the heteronormative family; the glue that holds capitalist relations of production together and "reduces the family relation to a mere money relation" (Marx and Engels, 2018[1848], p. 10). Domestic labour, including childcare, fell to the essentialised female who is controlled by the equally essentialised male (Armstrong, 2021, pp. 37-38). As Elizabeth Armstrong puts it "women who performed this labor were also naturalized, as biological beings unable to effect changes in these social orders". As is the case today, this heteronormative, monogamous family, based on male supremacy, produces "children of undisputed paternity" where the family becomes the legal structure through which assets are passed through families thereby preventing the equal distribution of wealth (Holborow, 2021, p. 13).

There are clear parallels between Marx's dichotomisation of society into a bourgeoisie and proletarian class structure and Paulo Freire's *oppressor* and *oppressed* dualism (Freire, 1972) where the oppressor reality is so strong, it convinces 'the oppressed' they are inferior. This, he maintains, results in a 'culture of silence' and an internalisation of the oppressor-led reality where "to have is to be" (Freire, 1972, p. 35). This capitalist status quo pushes forward a middle-class culture, dismisses alternative expressions and forms of creativity (ibid, p. 21–122) thereby discouraging millions of people from analysing the structural circumstances of their lives.

There are difficulties with these grand narratives that are beyond the scope of this study with one significant weakness being that the popular uprisings predicted by Marx, and to a lesser extent Freire, have failed to materialise. The ideas have also been significantly derailed by the failures of so-called socialist states to achieve emancipation. The reductionist thinking these ideas revolve around have been particularly challenged by post-structuralists who claim every-day meaning is much more complex and unstable than these versions suggest with each of us capable of seeing the world in any number of contradictory ways (Lyotard, 1984; Rosenau, 1991; Latter, 2013). Moreover, assumptions of collective experiences fail to adequately address the complexity of a person's life.

The Iranian Marxist-feminist Shahrzad Mojab (2015, p. 3) believes, as schools of thought, Marxism and Feminism have never been further apart. However there are radical feminists, many of whom I lean on, who continue to support anti-capitalist assertions that emphasise a patriarchal, class-based analysis amidst neoliberal-capitalist relations of power.⁴ Although free-market ideas can make sense in theory, neoliberalism hasn't worked instead things have gotten worse for millions of people. In 2019, the combined wealth of 2,153 people was greater than the combined wealth of 4.6 billion people (Coffey, et al., 2020, p. 21). Feminist critical theorists including Nancy Fraser, Angela McRobbie and Angela Davis maintain many women and girls fare worst under neoliberalism. This is because they are often relied on to solve capitalism's perpetual crises of overproduction be this as exploited workers, consumers or both (Armstrong, 2021, p. 36). It is also because capitalism relies on a structure of patriarchy where people perform gender (Butler, 1990) in accordance with dominant cultural conceptions. Patriarchy's feminine coding valorises women for being good mothers, attentive partners and nondisruptive employees. When she steps outside this, the misogynistic structures that extol male advantages pushes back. This, Kate Manne argues, is because of the sheer value of what women give and the loss of privilege this would result in for men. Manne (2017, p. 110) explains,

Consider that, as well as affection, adoration, indulgence and so on, such feminine coded goods and services include simple respect, love, acceptance, nurturing, safety, security and safe haven. There is kindness and compassion, moral attention, care, concern, and soothing. These forms of emotional and social labour go beyond the more

⁴ Neoliberalism hollows out state supports and eulogies entrepreneurialism believing economic growth through a 'free market' will trickle down to everyone through job creation (Allen & O'Boyle, 2021, pp. 198-200). This same market is encouraged, in fact often heavily incentivised, to provide such services as housing, health and transport because privatisation is conceptualised as more efficient and less bureaucratically burdensome without old-fashioned trade union agreements (Harvey, 2005, p. 23).

tangible reproductive and domestic services that may be less expected of women, or else have become more evenly divided (respectively) in some heterosexual partnerships.

Men aren't inherently bad rather an equally prevailing hegemonic notion of masculinity endures claiming "men are naturally competitive and aggressive and being a 'real man' is therefore marked by the struggle for control, conquest and domination. A man looks at the world, sees what he wants, and takes it" (Jenson 2017, pp. 153-154). It is within this context that Kate Manne describes structural misogyny as "the 'law enforcement' branch of a patriarchal order ... which has the overall function of *policing* and *governing* its ideology" (Manne, 2017, p. 23).

Anti-capitalist discourse doesn't mean that there isn't an appreciation for *intersectionality*; an expression attributed to Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) but ideas that have been articulated by hooks (see 1984; 1989) and others before this. Crenshaw (1989, p. 139) centred the way Black women's experiences are often centred on a "single-axis analysis" that distorts the accumulative experience of the multiple oppressions a person can face. The influential reproductive justice theorists Loretta Ross and Ricki Solinger (2017, p. 75) explain intersectionality well when they write, "oppressive forces do not emerge or act independently of each other; they depend on each other, they feed on each other, and they gain strength from each other; they are integrative". Singular thinking, including isolating class-oppression as much Marxism does, thereby fails to appreciate the accumulative effects of multiple oppressions such as ethnicity, citizenship, gender, social class, financial poverty, and disability.

However, intersectionality has been co-opted, including by the neoliberal academy where, although scholarship has "seriously challenged the patriarchal nature of all previous knowledge" many "seeds of conservatism" have been sewn that fail to address the globalised nature of material inequality and the full impact on women in the Global South (Mojab, 2015, pp. 6-7). Intersectionality, Salem (2018, p. 411) argues, has lost its Black feminist and Third World critical roots in favour of a whitened, catch-all approach that sanitises its anti-capitalist focus on material conditions (Salem 2018, p. 411). Whilst many liberal feminist organisations tout intersectionalism on websites and in promotional materials they make much of the achievements of privileged women; no longer barred from roles they were once denied.

When discussing this dominance of middle-class culture, Angela McRobbie (2020, p. 3) describes a “logic of competitive femininity” where some women show open disdain for women by “poverty shaming” those disproportionately impacted by structural inequality, an antagonism that is encouraged by capitalist culture. In *the rise of neoliberal feminism* (2018), Catherine Rottenberg equally argues this ‘neoliberal feminist’ is an indispensable accomplice in addressing one of capitalism’s greatest dilemmas; that exponential wealth creation is only possible if women continue to pick up the slack of unpaid and low-paid domestic and care labour (p. 84). Whilst donning tote-bags, t-shirts and mugs that call on us to ‘smash the patriarchy’ the liberal feminist often turns a blind eye to the low-paid, precarious workforce behind her own lifestyle choices and thinks nothing of outsourcing aspects of what was historically her own domestic and care work. The individualised, universalised Eurocentrism that much liberal feminism presumes is challenged by others too (for example Mohanty, 2003[1988]; Rich, 2003, p. 34) because it conjures up a singular image of a ‘third world woman’ waiting to be emancipated by her mostly white enlightened ‘sisters’.

1.6 Outline of thesis

This opening chapter introduced the research topic and touched on methodological approaches I employed. These were positioned within a conceptual framework that draws particularly from Reproductive Justice and critical-feminist pedagogy. Chapter two explores feminist research in more detail with an emphasis on my ontology and epistemology as relevant to social research. It describes the research design, details ethical considerations, outlines my approach to analysis and points out some limitations. Chapter three details the practicalities involved in creating a ‘feminist’ classroom including how I co-created a curriculum with participants. I will also present an overview of the first session. Chapter four is led by the rhythm of the online programme *Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Justice*. It draws heavily from materials produced as part of the research and from participant contributions. Finally, chapter five specifically recentres the research question and suggests guiding principles for an inclusive, feminist-pedagogy.

Chapter 2 – Doing feminist research.

The purpose of this chapter is to present an understanding of feminist research and unpack the methodological decisions I made in addressing this question. I share my ontological outlook; meaning my interpretation of reality, and epistemological assumptions, or my sense of how knowledge is generated (Leavy and Harris, 2019, p. 5). I outline the research paradigms I am informed by then outline ethical considerations, research design, my approach to analysis and some limitations.

2.1 Understanding qualitative social research.

Just as there is no one definition of feminism, there is also no one definition of social research. One set of ideas that remain influential to this day is *positivism*, a perspective that stems from realist philosophies that presume many of the scientific methods that are used when researching the natural sciences can be applied when researching people and society (Carey, 2012, p. 72). Positivism relies on the assumption that a ‘real world’ exists independent of how each of us experiences it. Social research is about seeking to understand this empirical reality one piece at a time and only under certain controlled conditions that ensure objectivity, validity and measurability. Put these results together and a better sense of the world emerges. Typically, but not exclusively, positivist approaches test certain hypotheses, emphasise statistical analyses and correlations, and seeks to predict future trends and issues. As Carey (2012, p. 73) puts it,

There is a search for objective or uncontaminated ‘truth’ as part of this research philosophy and also an assumption that the neutrality of a researcher can be an explicit part of any project. There is an assumption that the researcher may be able to predict future human behaviour, based upon collected ‘data’ and establish laws to enhance this process.

Although positivism is still dominant in much social research, many social scientists have poured scorn on the ontological assumptions at the core of positivism. Anti-positivists view social research as *value-laden* rather than value neutral and as influenced by a range of factors that include the nature of reality, the intimate relationships between the researcher and the researched and the situational constraints that shape an inquiry (May, 2011, p. 13; Robson and McCartan, 2016, p. 20-21). A range of competing opinions, or *paradigms* have emerged to express and embody a myriad of different approaches.

If positivism is on one end of a continuum of social research, *interpretivism* is at the other, a perspective that unearths meaning by appreciating differences in how each of us understand, and co-create our social world. To again quote Carey (2012, p. 74-75),

Interpretive researchers challenge the realist view of the world which argues that we can objectively evaluate and predict the behaviour of social actors or groups being studied. Instead, a subjective personal understanding of people and their interpretation of the ‘worlds around them’ becomes the goal of the researcher. Interpretive theorists also reject the idea that we can acquire or measure quantifiable ‘facts’ as in the positivistic tradition.

Where positivist-oriented researchers tend towards quantitative methods, researchers who lean towards interpretivists paradigms typically adopt qualitative methods, as I have done, that uncover the complex nature of human experiences using a range of methods such as interviewing, qualitative questionnaires, self-study methods, and group-work.

According to Sotirios Sarantakos (2013, p. 37) “the field of qualitative research is defined by a series of tensions, contradictions and hesitations”. One such tension within my own study is my ontological world view that supports the concept of structural inequality – therefore presuming a certain physical reality exists, and how I interweave interpretivism by analysing my own thoughts and practices. This is because I understand this same ‘real world’ as social constructed. As Robson and McCartan (2016, p. 24) explain,

social constructivism/constructivism indicates a view that social properties are constructed through interactions between people, rather than having a separate existence. Meaning does not exist in its own right; it is constructed by human beings as they interact and engage in interpretation.

My ontological/epistemological stance is thus to believe our collective interactions and learnt conventions upholds and reproduces our physical reality. Feminist epistemology places gender at the core of my inquiry and sees me, the researcher as a highly subjective agent (Sarantakos, 2013, p. 68).

2.1.1. Feminist research and social change.

Although feminist research is sometimes presented as a research paradigm in its own right, there are as many different approaches and beliefs as there is around feminism more generally. However there are some broadly agreed commonalities namely that patriarchy exists and that feminist research seeks to upturn once dominant concepts of research (and indeed scholarship

more broadly) that excluded the voices and experiences of women. This starting point means that one of its very functions is to emphasise the need for social change. As Gale Letherby (2003, p. 62) puts it, “

for many feminists, feminist research is feminist theory in action. Feminist theory has political aims in that it celebrates and is grounded in the daily experiences of women (and men), and by focusing on experience it is able to challenge mainstream/malestream knowledge.

Indeed the very practice of considering women’s experiences as worthy of academic inquiry amidst mountains of male created canonical knowledge that focused on the male-experience was a revolutionary act in its own right. Feminist research has been hugely influential in exploring differences in subjectivity and location and has transformed our understanding researcher-power (Ryan-Flood and Gill, 2009, p. 2).

Although any research that purports to be feminist in orientation is arguably better than research that denies these beliefs, feminist research is far from perfect. Feminist research has been led by the ‘waves’ metaphor outlined in chapter 1 resulting in the erasure of many people despite its claim to be inclusive (van der Tuin, 2011, p. 16). It is worth remembering that Audre Lorde’s (1983) much quoted assertion that ‘the masters tools will never dismantle the masters house’ was a response to the exclusion of Black women and feminists from the Global South at a New York conference in 1979. Moreover, appreciating the multifaceted concept of intersectionality and recognising the many ways in which non-white, non-middle class people have been silenced doesn’t divest me from my own whiteness, class, cis-gender and ablest privilege and I cannot ignore the material benefits I enjoy from an academic job I undoubtedly secured because of class privilege.

2.2 A case study research design.

This is the starting point from which I undertook this value-laden, critical feminist, collaborative research project that combines reflection, theory and action by embodying a participative process that responds practically and politically to a particular social concern (Kagan, Burton, and Siddiquee, 2017, p. 55). Centering my study around an actual event, i.e., a four-week course on Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Justice was to address a problem within much critical pedagogy where what is written on education within social movements is often abstract. The principle research model I opted for was a qualitative, instrumental case

study, where my inquiry into a contemporary phenomenon in its real life context has implications beyond the study itself (Sarantakos, 2013, p. 222).

Along with an continuous review of literature and theory, the research design I created had four, at times overlapping phases.

1. I designed recruitment materials and an information sheet (appendix 1 and 2) so I could recruit activists onto the project. Recruitment is described in more detail in section 2.2.1
2. I prepared and circulated an online pre-course anonymous questionnaire which was completed by 10 of the 14 activist to complete the programme (appendix 3).
3. I sought oral permission to save and draw from anonymised comments from the zoom chat function during active delivery of the 4- week programme.
4. I prepared and circulated an anonymous, online post-post-programme evaluation which was completed by six participants (appendix 4).

I also invited people to participate in an optional online one-to one interview. However, just one person volunteered so, with their consent, I dropped this facet of the study.

2.2.1 Recruiting participants

Recruitment was through purposeful selection of those with direct experience of the topic being researched. The criteria for inclusion was that a person had to be actively involved in a pro-choice organisation. I ensured applicants fitted this criteria by using seven identifiable gatekeepers namely:

1. The Abortion Rights Campaign.
2. Parents for Choice.
3. The Alliance for Choice.
4. Termination for Medical Reasons.
5. ROSA (for Reproductive Rights against Oppression, Sexism and Austerity).
6. Sligo Action Reproductive Rights.
7. Abortion Access Campaign West.

Using gatekeepers is a recognised method of research recruitment that involves asking host organisations to circulate information in a way that ensures these gatekeepers have no knowledge on who gets involved (Paul, 2010, p. 39). When discussing the challenge of working with participants that are known to the researcher, Paul (2010, p. 27) suggests there is “no

absolute correct procedure” but recommends a path similar to that which I took. Despite being a member of ARC therefore having access to the shared private platform ‘Basecamp’ that members use to communicate, I formally contacted ARC via its conveners⁵ and got their permission to advertise the programme amongst its c50 active members. Once this was granted I posted the following message on the Basecamp platform with an information flier attached (appendix 1).

Online course on Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Justice.

Posted by Camilla Fitzsimons on Nov 7, 2021

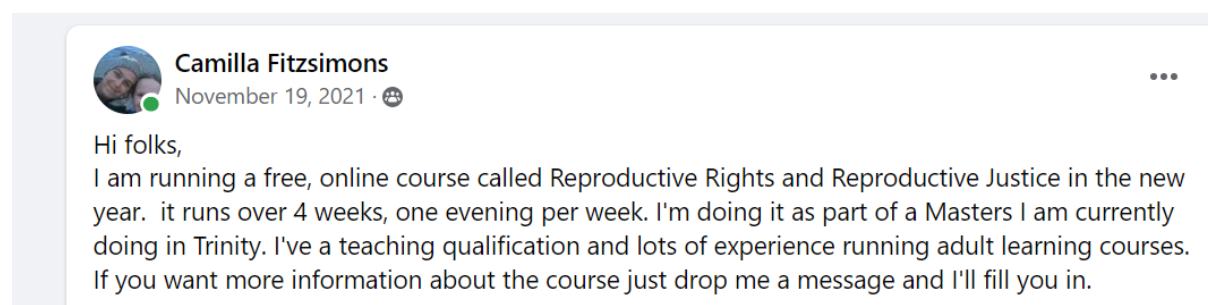


Hi folks, I'm going to run a free online course on Reproductive Rights and Justice. Part of the process includes evaluating the course in real time and also interviewing some participants about their activism. Have a read to find out more or leave any comments if you have questions. You can also email me if you have questions or comments you would prefer to ask off Basecamp. The research element has been ethically approved by Trinity College but it is absolutely fine to sign up to do the course and not take part in the research (nobody will know only you). Have a read and sign up if you want :-)

Thanks to ARC for letting me do this.

Five people contacted me on foot of this message. Once they made contact, I sent them a more comprehensive information and consent form (see appendix 2).

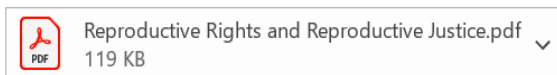
I followed this same process with a second gatekeeper - Parents for Choice, an organisation with cross-over membership with ARC.⁶ It has a closed Facebook discussion group with 2,848 members. As an existing member of Parents for Choice I had freedom to post to the site so posted the following message:



⁵ This is an annual rotating role, shared by two people and drawn from the wider membership of ARC.

⁶ Parents for Choice was created in 2014 by Helen Guinane and Sinéad Redmond in response to an at times hostile environment for pro-choice parents to share their thoughts and experiences in an Ireland where abortion was strictly prohibited in most circumstances (Fitzsimons, 2021, p. 96).

Finally I sent an email to groups that I was familiar with but who weren't affiliated with ARC or who had their own distribution lists outside of ARC. These were Alliance for Choice, a Northern Ireland based organisation that was formed in the 1990s by Trade unionists and pro-choice campaigners, Termination for Medical Reasons (TFMR) that was formed in 2012 and that focuses on supporting people travelling for abortion because of foetal anomalies. I also contacted ROSA a socialist feminist organisation established in 2013 who I regularly work with, Sligo Action Reproductive Rights and Abortion Access Campaign West, both of who are rurally-focused independent organisations. All of these groups were sent the email below.



Hi Everyone,
 I hope you are all well. I am getting in touch to tell you about a free course that I am hoping to deliver in the new year, online. Subject to numbers. The course is called Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Justice, to be eligible you need to be an activist. I'm doing the course alongside some research which is entirely opt-in i.e. you can do the course and not participate in the research. The information is attached, get back to me at this email or the one in the form, whichever works best for you. Feel free to pass this on to others.
 Kind regards
 Camilla

Overall I recruited 15 activists for my online course as detailed in table 1 below.

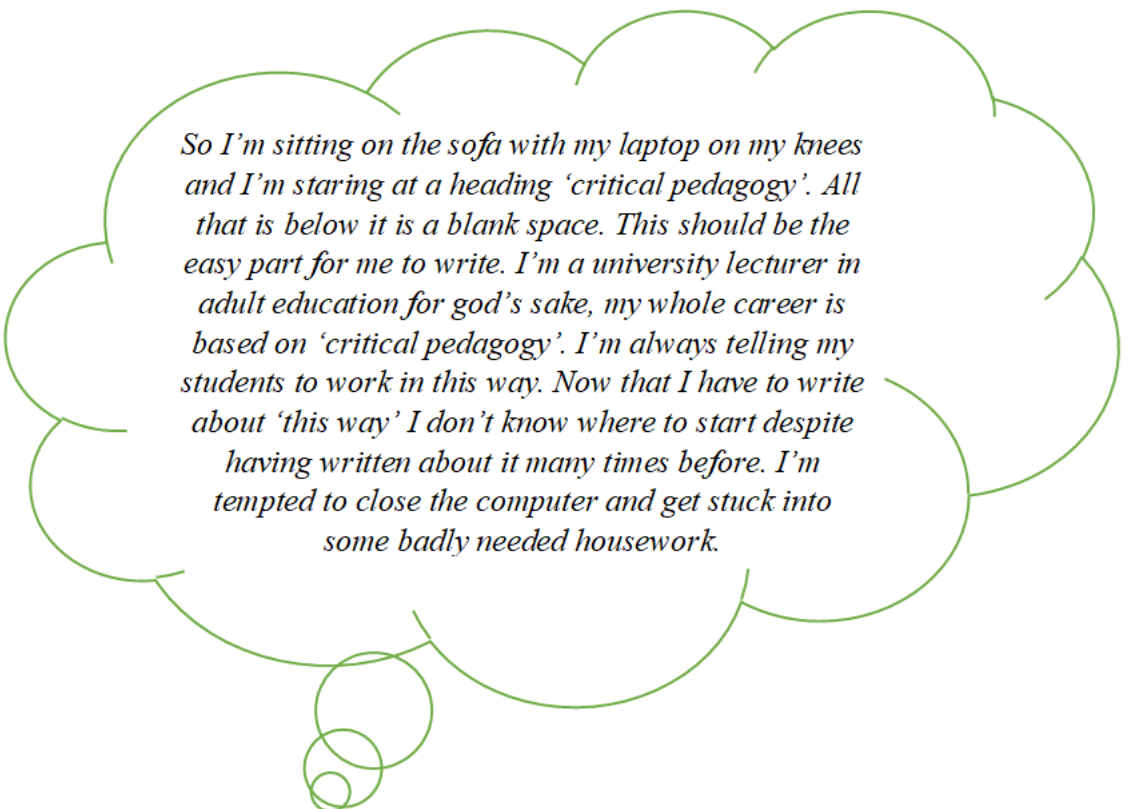
The Abortion Rights Campaign	Post on basecamp	5
Alliance for Choice	Email	3
ROSA	Email	0
Parents for Choice	Facebook post	6
Sligo Action Reproductive Rights	Email	0
Abortion Access Campaign West	Email	0
Termination for Medical Reasons	Email	1
Total		15

Table 1 – Overview of participants for the online programme.

Just before the course began, one person was forced to drop out because of competing work commitments leaving a total of 14 people each of who completed the course in totality.

2.3 Infusing myself in the study

As modelled in chapter 1, the insights of these participants weren't the only source of data generated rather I also relied on autoethnographic influences that situated me in the study both in terms of method and text (Denzin, 2014, p. 19).



So I'm sitting on the sofa with my laptop on my knees and I'm staring at a heading 'critical pedagogy'. All that is below it is a blank space. This should be the easy part for me to write. I'm a university lecturer in adult education for god's sake, my whole career is based on 'critical pedagogy'. I'm always telling my students to work in this way. Now that I have to write about 'this way' I don't know where to start despite having written about it many times before. I'm tempted to close the computer and get stuck into some badly needed housework.

According to Yvette Taylor and Maddie Breeze (2020, p. 1), the 'imposter syndrome' evident in this reflection is ubiquitous in higher education. It is often talked about where I work with the dominant discourse being to individualise the problem as I did when contemplating the pressures of writing to a certain standard. Taylor and Breeze (2020, pp. 3-6) write against this individualist tendency by drawing our attention to broader structural concerns that include how academic competencies are mostly constructed in accordance with middle-class, white, masculine norms. The insecurities many women in academia feel are thus institutional and caused by a denigration of much feminist scholarship as "not quite proper academic knowledge" when compared to the seemingly neutral, more balanced, masculine pursuit of objective scholarship (Taylor and Breeze, 2020, p. 2). My default concern for housework is also not unrelated as although my thoughts focused on the burden of care work many women carry at home, there is a growing acknowledgement of high degrees of 'academic housework' carried out by tenured female academics who devote more time to building supports through student care and mentoring to the detriment of research-led, academic career making (see Mirsa, Lundquist, Holmes, and Agiomavritis, 2011; Tamar, Finnborg, and Thorgerdur, 2017 for discussion on this). Inquiring into my own sense of imposter and exposing my own

vulnerabilities in this regard made me more alert to similar feelings that emerged amongst research participants that were shared anonymously, before the course began and because I asked the question “what fears (if any) do you have about taking on this course?” (pre-course questionnaire). Two out of ten people, both of who were also women, used the same language to describe their own insecurities. One wrote,

I am a bit scared about speaking in front of people I don't know, especially due to the sense of "imposter syndrome" that I often have.

From the second,

Good old annoying imposter syndrome!

Reflecting on multiple care burdens also proved important as it helped me reveal cultures and discourses of power where women continue to be cast as ‘other’, including within social movements. Emma Craddock (2019, pp. 138-140) argues this is because the female activist experience often falls outside of the vision of ‘the ideal activist’, a person who is always available to prioritise ‘the cause’ over everything else.

2.3.1 My research diary.

Another way I infused myself was by drawing from an audio research diary I maintained whilst delivering the course. This practice is more significant than a set of practical notes rather it created a repository for critical reflection at a time of personal uncertainty (Browne, 2013, p. 420). Each evening, immediately following delivery of the programme, I went walking outdoors and recorded my inner thoughts on how the evening had gone. This decision to walk and talk, albeit to myself, was influenced by a growing body of literature on the role of walking in social research. Although much literature focuses on walking interviews (for example see O’Neill and Roberts, 2022, p. 5-9) some theorists focus on the transformative nature of mindfully walking alone, a process where the brain and body act in unison (Pujol, 2018, p. 7). This symbiosis of movement and reflection, deepened my insights and encouraged me to be more open about my vulnerabilities. By way of example, my first entry following the first session began like this,

*J**us, f**k, I am really surprised how nervous I was, particularly the ten minutes before. I guess I was nervous but then planning it took away all those nerves. I felt ‘I know my s**t, I’ve got loads of stuff here so that was fine but then at about 6.30 I got*

really, really nervous again 'who will show up' and 'what will it be like' – my own kind of 'do I know enough' but look, I do...

This excerpt emphasises the importance of planning for critical pedagogy but also illuminates how I too am susceptible to nerves despite many years of professional practice. Had I not maintained this journal, I would not have remembered just how unsettled I was.

2.4 Research ethics.

Colin Robson (2011, p. 197) describes ethical decision making in social research as a commitment to the rights of participants, a commitment to respect participants and a commitment to the right to participate. These principles are commonly enshrined within research guidelines produced by professional associations within certain disciplines. Before successfully applying for ethical approval from the School of Histories and Humanities (SHH) Research Ethics Committee at Trinity College Dublin, I referred to the guidelines proposed by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (2018). These guidelines, which informed my practice throughout the study, state,

We recommend that at all stages of a project – from planning through conduct to reporting – educational researchers undertake wide consultation to identify relevant ethical issues, including listening to those in the research context/site(s), stakeholders and sponsors. This means that ethical decision-making becomes an actively deliberative, ongoing and iterative process of assessing and reassessing the situation and issues as they arise. (BERA, 2018, p. 2)

Ethics is thus an ongoing process, and not the 'tick box' approach it sometimes resembles.

2.4.1 Ensuring informed consent

The principle of consent I carried was to ensure everyone gave full and informed consent at a variety of stages. The tiered process of entry I described in 2.2.1 was deliberate. I didn't want to overwhelm people with too much information in the first instance rather to give them space and time to contemplate my request in totality and by degrees before deciding if they wanted to get involved (Leavy and Harris, 2019, p. 108). When they did sign up, a process of 'voluntary participation' was continued meaning I did not contact people individually rather, sent a group email (with contacts hidden using the bcc function) inviting people to opt-into the

pre-programme questionnaire making it very clear this was for everyone and that just doing the course without completing the anonymous questionnaires was absolutely fine.

2.4.2 Maintaining participant confidentiality

Ten people (out of 14) opted into this questionnaire. I never shared this number with the group rather kept this confidential. This was as part of my ongoing commitment to confidentiality, a concept often closely linked to consent. My approach to confidentiality was maintained in the following way:

- All questionnaires were anonymous. Where participants were invited to take part in a one-to-one interview, they were instructed to get in touch with me separately so I could not link their answers with their name.
- Although confidentiality in group settings could not be guaranteed, I never revealed the names of participants.
- Once the course was running, we took time to discuss group boundaries including confidentiality.
- On two occasions, participants revealed their identity within anonymous questionnaires. I redacted this information and removed any identifiable markers when sharing participant's words.
- All data collected was stored on a password encrypted computer that only I have access to.

In accordance with instructions by the SHH research ethics committee this data will be retained for seven years.

2.5 Analysing data

Broadly speaking, the process of analysing qualitative data is where the researcher makes collective meaning from individual contributions. There is no consensus on how to analyse qualitative data or on what makes an acceptable analysis (Sarantakos, 2013, p. 344). As is common, I thematically organised the findings from both questionnaires; a process which involves reading and re-reading all submissions, then organising these into a coherent pattern (Robson, 2011, p. 481). Robson (2011, p. 482) identifies techniques a researcher should be aware of when undertaking this process that include looking for repetition, allowing categories

to emerge organically, paying attention to similarities and differences, and, importantly, seeking out missing data. This latter point refers to a researcher's capacity to notice relevant absences and, supplement knowledge by drawing from alternative methodologies, in this case my own reflections. Sharing aspects of myself, doesn't simply mean infusing anecdotes from my past or present without analysis rather the purpose is to make meaning from these stories and ephiphanies in a way that locates them within their historical moment (Denzin, 2014, p. 30). Denzin (ibid., p. 31) describes the process as,

Being vulnerable, pushing for connections between personal troubles and public issues. Here in the moment of the present, writers interrogate that spaces where praxis intersects with pedagogy.

2.6 Research limitations

All social research has limitations and this study is no different. One significant shortfall is that, despite a conceptual framework that is heavily critical of the dominance of white, Eurocentric knowledge, the majority if not all those I recruited appeared to share much the same life experiences as me in terms of racialised and class privilege. This is within a context where migrants and ethnic minorities in Ireland are those most impacted by reproductive oppression as they navigate a maternity care system where institutional racism is rife and where white bodies are repeatedly privileged (Lynch, 2018, p. 139). I invited a guest facilitator from migrant and ethnic minority representative groups but wasn't able to secure anyone. This problem hasn't gone away and it is unsurprising I couldn't secure a speaker from a migrant rights organisation. It isn't surprising nobody was willing or able to come into space that had ultimately been created by me, a white, privileged person; spaces that subtly and continuously undermine attempts to centralise racism as a major concern (Eddo Lodge, 2017, pp. 156-157) I knew the solution wasn't to tokenistically try to recruit people into the space simply to make them more visible and me feel better instead I sought to embody *white feminism*, an expression that refers to any feminism which universalises a white perspective (Aziz, 1997, p. 70) and talked openly about my concerns with the group. This absence of racialised diversity within my own group concerned me throughout the programme, as evidenced by this research diary entry,

Overall I am starting to think about next week's session and how we close it. No migrant voices, no migrant voices, no migrant voices. What's that saying about who is not in the room? But there you go, nothing I can do about it now, maybe I can show a video?(research diary, January 26th 2022)

A second limitation (and disappointment) is that uptake in this final phase of the study was lower than uptake in the pre-programme questionnaire with just six out of a possible 14 people completing this form as compared with 10 contributors before the course started. Nevertheless, the insights these contributions provided, go some way in addressing the research question and in capturing the impact of the programme on activist identities and wellbeing.

Chapter three will now focus more deliberately on the practice of feminist pedagogy then draws from participant insights in the co-creation of the curriculum implemented across the four week programme.

Chapter 3 – Creating a ‘feminist’ classroom.

This chapter is the first of two chapters that is principally descriptive. With the help of participant voices, it tells the story of how I brought a group together under a vision of what education ought to be, but often is not. I will articulate the pre-course methods I used to create what I hoped would be a liberatory, engaged environment where we could unpack the circumstances of our lives, and translate collaborative learning into meaningful praxis. In particular (and as was the case in earlier chapters) I draw from the philosophies of bell hooks (1952-2021) who consistently infused her educational texts with critical feminist insight and whose work remains a significant impact on my practice.

One of the central tasks bell hooks sets for a critical educator is to “relinquish our ties to traditional ways of teaching that reinforce domination” and “focus on the “teacher-student relationships and the issue of power” (1989 p. 52). There are often tell-tale signs of this ambition when groups come together in person. Chairs are often organised in a circle and not rows and educators, who are also seated, avoid occupying that traditional space at the front of the room. Amidst the group they then adopt a facilitative, problem posing approach and not a lecturing style. This is so that many voices, not just the educator’s voice, can be heard and so that the teacher/student dichotomy can be disrupted. Engaged pedagogy, hooks (2010, p. 19) asserts, “begins with the assumption that we learn best when there is an interactive relationship between student and teacher” and where facilitators are “willing to engage students beyond a surface level” and where ethics of care are upheld. These conditions help build what is sometimes called ‘a learning community’ where adults are supported to take risks, to challenge one another (and the so-called educator) and to collaboratively co-construct knowledge. hooks explains,

engaged pedagogy makes the classroom a place where wholeness is welcomed and students can be honest, even radically open. They can name their fears, voice their resistance to thinking, speak out, and they can also fully celebrate the moments where everything clicks, and collective learning is taking place. (hooks, 2010, p. 21)

Adopting these principles doesn’t mean producing an unstructured space, rather I drew from a repertoire of experiential approaches that allowed me to introduce theories in response to, rather than fore fronting, the contributions of participants. As Brid Connolly (2008, p. 92) puts it,

It is vital to recognize that facilitation is not an absence of direction and expertise or a chaotic mele leaving people to their own devices. Rather, it is a highly organized, critically reflective, skill-based process that depends on the approach and expertise of the facilitators, and underpinning principles of respect, tolerance, trust and transparency.

Adopting a facilitative role also doesn't mean pretending that my presence there is the same as everyone else rather the 'educator' in any group setting carries considerable power (hooks, 1989, p. 52). This power should be acknowledged and named where appropriate and I aimed to be open about my own learning and frequently shared times when I too didn't know the answer.

3.1 Co-creating a curriculum

Oftentimes, classrooms can be participatory and engaging but still orientated towards banking models. One particular way this happens is where the 'educator' retains total control in determining the topics, or contents, people will discuss. The socially constructed 'knowledge' presented to people is often that which is produced and validated within privileged circles that don't represent most people's lives (Barr, 1999, p. 122). One way to diffuse power is to co-create a curriculum. Sharing responsibility in this way not only strengthens the democratic process, it models a practice where it isn't the sole responsibility of the educator to make classrooms an interesting place to be (hooks, 2010, p. 118) and where everyone seems their knowledge and contribution as valid.

Co-designing the curriculum was guided by a number of question I asked the pre-programme questionnaire which was completed by ten people. I asked, "*what are your reasons for signing up for this course*" from which three overlapping, themes emerged. These are:

- (i) to learn more about the theories of reproductive rights and justice;
- (ii) to apply this learning to advance the cause and develop particular skills to guide my activism.
- (iii) to re-connect with others and be part of a learning community.

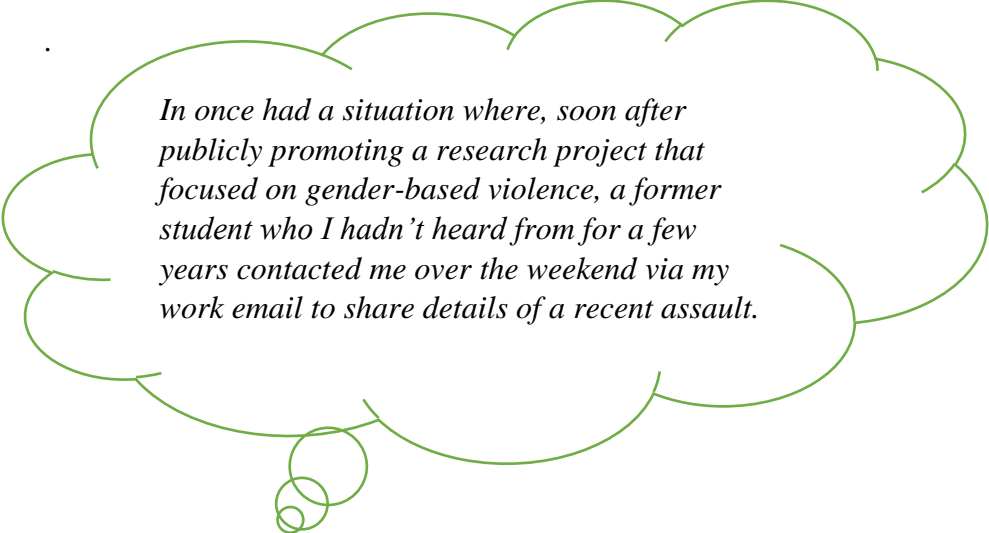
The first theme, to strengthen theoretical understanding, was the strongest topic to emerge (shared by eight people). Answers included, "to get a better understanding of reproductive justice and how reproductive rights fit into that framework" and "to have a good theoretical

foundation to underpin my activism”. Another shared, “I am keen to get a better understanding of the theory underpinning the fight for reproductive rights”.

The second theme, to practically apply learning to their activist work, is expressed as wanting “to be more effective at driving change” and “I hope to leave this course with a better understanding of the difficulties faced by people and why, how I can provide more support, and work on making systemic changes”. Another sought to “improve my skills and try to become a more confident activist” and wanting to have “the knowledge to if I ever have to help someone in need”. In one final example, this activist stated,

I don't want to stand still as an activist but rather learn new skills, specifically, how to better inspire, recruit, lead, and empower other activists, and how to build coalitions with other groups

Martin and Coy (2017, p. 518) argue skills-based learning is often absent from activist groups were “there is little systematic training in either general or specific skills” and often “an assumption or expectation that everyone can do everything”.



In once had a situation where, soon after publicly promoting a research project that focused on gender-based violence, a former student who I hadn't heard from for a few years contacted me over the weekend via my work email to share details of a recent assault.

I include this reflection to underscore how challenging being a reproductive rights activist can be. This email was difficult to read, but it was one of a number of contacts (often face-to-face) that I have had over the years where university students have sought support because they know what my research interests are. My actions in response to this communication was to reply with numbers to Women's Aid and the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre but also my own work number so she could get in touch with me if she wanted. This response, to ensure she could connect with expert services and supports but also model my willingness to actively listen, is one that relies on certain supports for me that I have built up over time. Sara Ahmed, drawing from the work

of Audre Lorde, argues collective care is an important political act (Ahmed, 2017, pp. 236-238) and one which must be fundamental to feminist activism. One of the often cited criticisms of the 2018 referendum campaign to introduce abortion services was an absence of collective care which contributed to high levels of burnout (Murphy, 2020; Fitzsimons, 2021; pp. 148-152). Doris Murphy (2020, p. 432) calls out activists groups, including those she was directly involved with, explaining “it became clear through the course of my surveys and interviews that emphasising self-care was not sufficient to maintain activists’ wellbeing during the Repeal campaign”.

This collective need overlaps with the third theme this question elicited namely to reconnect with others in a collective space. People talked about wanting to learn from others (including from me!). One wrote “I’m a follower of your work (your recent book) and want to meet and learn from others on the course. Another commented “I am hoping to learn a lot from others”. This final excerpt captures,

I signed up for this course because since the beginning of the pandemic I haven't been able to do as much activism / campaigning / meeting with other activists / giving talks etc as usual (for obvious reasons). I want to connect with other like-minded people, to feel like I am still working for change in reproductive rights, which is so important to me, and because I am hoping to learn a lot from others.

Two other questions - “*what do you hope we cover/talk about?*” and a “*what are the things that you are most curious to find out more about?*” again probed into the topics people hoped to discuss. These were,

- (i) history of abortion rights movement nationally and internationally,
- (ii) how, to borrow the words from one respondent, “deeply race, class, gender, access, and sexuality influence and impact access to reproduction facilities”,
- (iii) the medicalisation of childbirth and wider issues surrounding maternity services,
- (iv) the role of collective action including (from one) the role of trade unionism,
- (v) a deeper understanding of reproductive rights, health and justice,
- (vi) feminist theory,
- (vii) trans rights and their relationship with reproductive rights activism,
- (viii) Disability in the context of reproductive justice.

Finding time to attend to all eight topics was a big ask. However, a central concept of hook’s theory of *engaged pedagogy* is to produce critical, self-directed classrooms that break free from the notion that gaining knowledge relies on an ‘expert’, is private, individual and competitive

(hooks, 2010, p. 43). I needed to trust others would bring knowledge on these topics to the group and that the process of asking people to name their own learning needs would itself stimulate people to self-direct in finding their own sources.

3.2 Preparing for a learning community

Other pre-course questions focused on pedagogic processes and allowed people to express vulnerabilities. When I asked “*what unanswered questions (if any) do you have that you are reluctant or embarrassed to ask in wider activist spaces?*” most people responded that nothing came to mind or repeated some content oriented requests. Two people responded in more depth raising additional themes that were useful to the pedagogic process. The first of these was shared by the only man to sign up for the course who wrote,

I may be spoiling the anonymous aspect of the survey slightly here, but I would like to be more confident that, as a man in predominantly a woman's movement, I'm not dominating proceedings, what (else) I can do to ensure I don't, etc. I've been reluctant to even *ask* the question because that's centring me/ men's concerns

There are a number of reasons why it is important for men to be involved in reproductive politics not least because men are also impacted by restrictions on abortion availability both in terms of travelling to accompany partners, supporting illegal activity by sourcing pills online and because trans men and non-binary people may also need abortion services. If men are not involved, it also reinforces the belief that managing fertility is not their concern. However there have been times where some men have mis-used their societal power by unreflectively occupying leadership roles, especially during periods where reproductive rights has been a hot topic (Taylor, 1997, pp. 678-681; Fitzsimons, 2021, pp. 119-121). My own experience of this likely contributed to some anxiety I felt about a male-attendee. This comment led me to connect with and contemplate this anxiety more deeply. Ashley Fetters (2019, n/p) agrees men are also affected by barriers to exercising one's reproductive rights but helped me appreciate other reasons why their involvement is crucial including to counter-balance high levels of male involvement in anti-abortion movements which seek to impose traditional gender roles and to atone for the heavy role many men historically played in constructing the complex legal frameworks that unnecessarily control reproductive health. That being said, a feminist

pedagogy doesn't mean creating conflict free environments rather it means creating conditions where certain behaviours are challenged (Currier, 2020, p. 349).

A second important insight was where a future participant shared a sense of inadequacy about entering into the space. They write,

No questions come to mind, I am just aware of how new I am to all of this and all the history there is to learn and even how much I missed in the last years. So I would just be hoping I can keep up and it's not embarrassing how little I know :)

This theme also emerged when I asked “*what fears (if any) do you have about taking on this course?*”. Three spoke about what this respondent called “a natural nervousness”. Another shared,

I'm quite shy so 'highly participatory' sounds a little daunting, though I do always enjoy group discussions as they raise such interesting perspectives.

It is normal that people feel anxious when entering into a learning space particularly given that schools in particular can be a site of trauma for many of us (Connolly, 2008, pp. 61-62). Creating a learning community means not only naming these anxieties but viewing them as a source of knowledge (Heron, 1999, p. 55) that opens a door to structurally critique schools and other similar institutions.

Eight people responded to the final question posed “*What else would you like to say?*”. The comment “Thank you for providing the course, I am really looking forward to it. The very best of luck with your Masters :-D” sums up sentiment across all eight answers.

3.2.1 Designing my first session

These findings revealed many challenges and raised my own anxiety levels. How would I meet the needs of learners in a way that is collective, nourishing, and destabilising of the status quo? How would create a feminist space – one where I would balance my desire to instil certain ideas whilst allowing people to adapt the ideas I would introduce to suit their own ways of knowing (Ryan, 2001, p. 111). This was the lens through which I created my first session plan.

Lesson plan session 1

7pm Share in turn your name, whereabouts you are in Ireland, and how your day has been so far.

Explain that tonight's session will focus on introductions, overview and discussion on reproductive health, rights and justice and Irish law but also some personal reflection work on what got us all here in the first place.

7.10pm Questions and anxieties in a group.

Talk through the first slide.

Encourage people to take a moment, note for themselves if they wish what anxiety most spoke to them.

Split people into groups and for a few minutes they share their anxieties then send the questions into the groups using the chat function.

7.25pm – feedback from the different groups and get an agreement that this can become the group guidelines for working together.

7.30pm – why am I here?

Why am I here (not the course)/what's my story?

Free write for 3-5 minutes – you won't have to share this, but you will be invited to share what you want to share orally in smaller groups of 3.

After the 3-5 minutes are up, organise people into groups of 3-4 people to share:

i) a little bit more about themselves and ii) why they are still a reproductive rights activist.

Bring everyone back together and open a general discussion on people's motivations and experiences. You do not need to hear from everyone rather just a flavour of dominant themes.

(if there is time take a quick break here)

7.50pm – Reproductive rights and reproductive justice.

First slide, health, rights and justice.

Say a little more about the origins of RJ – in the 1990s during the Clinton administration 'Safe, legal and rare' – *Women of African Descent for Reproductive Justice* now Sister Song.

One of the issues is the appropriation of their ideas with them erased out of the picture, use 9 minute video Loretta Ross – reproductive Justice.

8.20pm – discussion

Closing round – What is the biggest take-away for you from tonight?

Table 2 - Lesson plan session 1

Delivery of this plan, and the subsequent design and delivery of three more sessions will be the focus of chapter 4.

Chapter 4 – ‘Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Justice’ - programme delivery.

This chapter describes the delivery of the four-week online course ‘Reproductive rights and Reproductive Justice’ that involved 14 activists from across four voluntary groups focused on improving reproductive rights in across the Island of Ireland. This was a brand new course created purely for the purposes of this research. Had I not been completing the Masters in Gender and Women’s Studies this thesis partly fulfils, I would not have delivered this programme.

4.1 Session 1; Building community and introducing theory

As I have outlined thus far, a clear ambition of the course was to disrupt dominant ‘banking’ approaches to education through highly participatory, hands-on methods that recognised diversity in learning styles. In theory at least, people knew they were coming into a space where inputs would be short, cameras would be on and where they would be expected to draw from their own knowledge and experiences.

It would be disingenuous to suggest participant insights and suggestions for the curriculum would be the only driving force rather the feminist pedagogy I embodied was “about ‘unsettling’ problematic assumptions and common sense perspectives that people have, expanding experiences, understandings and capacities” (Clover et al., 2022, p. 5). As it is sometimes put in adult education circles, the objective is to meet people ‘where they are at’ but not necessarily leave them there.

4.1.1 Creating a group agreement.

A starting point was to create a community where people felt solidarity, significance and security so that insecurities and vulnerabilities could be shared, validated and unpacked. As my planning reveals (table 2), I wouldn’t launch into presenting theory, as is often the case, rather more than half of the first session (and much of future sessions) was spent getting to know each other, sharing motivations and, importantly settling on a group agreement that would guide the next four weeks. I didn’t directly propose a ‘group agreement’, in fact I don’t think I used that

expression at all. Instead I gave a short input on anxieties in a group setting (see appendix 4 for the PowerPoint I used) then posed two questions:

1. What can the group could do to lessen anxieties, then
2. What I can Camilla do to lessen anxieties.

Participants discussed these questions in small groups which I was not part of before proposing the following guiding principles.

These are the guiding principles that we will endeavour to work to for the time we are together.

1. What is shared in the group stays in the group.
2. Don't assume that everyone is on the same page.
3. Don't tell someone else's story in the bigger group when it is shared in a smaller group.
4. We recognise that it is harder on zoom to support each other and that people might feel crap leaving the space, let's be sensitive to this and look out for each other.
5. Be kind and allow people to phrase things their own way.
6. Give positive feedback (Camilla).
7. Talking about our anxieties help alleviate them so let's keep that up.
8. Remember people have different experiences.
9. Each of us are coming from the best of intentions and might get things wrong sometimes.
10. Ask questions as much as you can, no such thing as a stupid question, the ones you are afraid to ask are usually the ones other want asked also.
11. Make the most of the group.
12. Keep up the small groups as well as the larger group.

Table 3 - Group agreement

Groups agreements are often seen as an essential part of the toolbox of adult education so much so that they have become routine and often performative. In fact my first attempt to report on this phase was to do a google search on the importance of group agreements – myself 'performing' their centrality. My authentic analysis is to acknowledge that, because of my familiarity with this process, I only properly engaged with the essence of this agreement when writing up this thesis. This has been an important insight that will impact my engagement with groups moving forward.

Creating this agreement undoubtedly shaped the culture of our group ensuring when we moved into the more directive second half of the session, people frequently shared questions and insights before we moved into dedicated space for lengthy unstructured discussion. I then closed the group by asking each person to share one thing that has stayed with them from the session. These closing rounds became a feature of each week, enabling formative assessment of the impacts of the course and also an ethics of care and support for everyone involved. On the first night comments overwhelmingly focused on the benefits of naming anxieties and the importance of our group agreement.

My own reflections (and vulnerabilities) are captured in this excerpt from my research diary:

Overall I think that, look, trust the process. I was worried that people would be like, bored in groups or looking for the lecture, but actually people weren't looking for the lecture at all and that puts me in a very good position for next week I think, ye. I hope people come back, I'll be so embarrassed if they don't. So now I am going to be anxious all week to find out if people come back but look, if they do they do. I'll get a sense of it more when I contact people during the week and when I send the resources. I'll see what people say and think and I can take it from there. (research diary 12th January, 2022)

Follow up materials and communication.

One aspect of the process I hadn't anticipated was the weight I would put on post-session communications. The initial tone of these correspondence was accidental and in response to internet disruption during the first session (see preface). This led to my first email setting a particular mood that would become, for me, an important grounding in consolidating what I believed were the key points of discussion. My emails also generated a repository of resources that I hoped would be beneficial. Given their central role, I include each email beginning with session 1 overleaf.

Hi Everyone,

Thanks so much for your participation yesterday. I'm still not right from losing internet connection but it'll give me lots to write about in my own Masters!

What a sad day for Ireland.... [this related to a highly reported random femicide that was dominating national discourse].

I've attached the material from last night,

The group agreement we made

This is a working document so please propose any changes or point out anything that you think might be missing. We can finalise it next week.

The plan I used for the evening.

This might be useful to some of you who are involved in education work yourself or who are thinking of running your own workshops.

The PowerPoint

This includes the link to the video by Loretta Ross which is part one of a two part video on YouTube. It also includes the list of other resources. There is a trigger warning with the film I have recommended which is specifically relating to abortion so not the wider gamut of reproductive rights we talked about. Personally I found it very useful in bringing some of the more contentious aspects of the abortion debate to the fore (esp. the need for safe access zones and gestational limits).

Some readings

Some of you might be interested in the readings that are attached.

- The introduction Chapter from the book *Radical Reproductive Justice*, this summarises some of the points we discussed and has some discussion about the role of White people in the movement for Reproductive Justice.
- Chapter 2 from *Repealed, Ireland's Unfinished Fight for Reproductive Rights*. This is an up to date account of reproductive oppressions in Ireland today across that broad spectrum of all aspects of repro rights. (if anyone wants any other chapters from this book let me know and I can send you a pdf, I know the author!!).

Other resources that were mentioned.

I talked about a couple of resources.

A report by the IHREC about the distribution of care and unpaid labour in Irish society, if you are interested in this it's here: https://www.ihrec.ie/app/uploads/2019/07/Caring-and-Unpaid-Work-in-Ireland_Final.pdf

The book *Living a Feminist Life*, by Sara Ahmed. Personally, I LOVE this book, it changed my life as a feminist and as a woman and a lot of things fell into place. Again if anyone is interested in chapters from it I can download these from the Maynooth library and send them on. Last night I talked about her chapter about happiness and how heteronormative kinships are portrayed as the happiest place to be when in fact it is often a miserable existence especially for women.

I was unable to save the chat because of the internet issues but [participant name] if you could share the resource you named that would be fantastic.

Next week I am hoping to give some space to hear a bit more about the work that people are involved in at the moment, have done in the past, or would like to be working in some way. We'll also talk about the situation in Ireland, North and South and get a sense of global concerns also.

I hope that all makes sense, please get back to me if I can help in any way.

Camilla

Table 4 - Email correspondence following session 1

My delayed analysis of this first correspondence is less enthusiastic than I was at the time. Whilst I welcome the informal nature of my words, could naming particular texts as ones that I ‘love’ create what hooks (2010, p. 119) describes as “unthinking compliance” where I have failed to appreciate the power I hold not only as the group leader, but that which is bestowed upon me as a white, cis gendered and heteronormative?

Post course evaluative comments specific to session 1

Another site for analysis are contributions some participants anonymously provided when completing the post-course questionnaire (see appendix 4). With reference to the time spent getting to know each other one wrote, “I’ll be honest, at the beginning, I thought there was a lot of time spent not learning and getting to know each other” then temper this by continuing “but really, that ended up being so very important”. This comment, on the Reproductive Justice framework presented was echoed by others also: “I found the information on human rights, justice and various legal instruments and actions very engaging and interesting.”

4.2 More about the work that we do (session 2).

Session 2 – More about the work that we do.

7pm – hear from everyone, name, the sort of day you are having so far, and a bit more about the activism that you do or have done in the past.

Into small groups to talk about where you are at from last week

- What thoughts lingered?
- What questions do you have?

Outline for this evening:

- Talk about our current laws
- Talk about what’s happening in Texas.
- Introduce you to the ancillary recommendations of the Citizen’s Assembly.
- Maybe take a break

Show Sinead (14.04 minutes) and Maeve (40 minutes) discussing the situation in ROI and then NI.

Open a general discussion for questions

Show the two videos on Texas – explaining the law and then the impacts of the law.

One slide – ancillary recommendations of the Citizen’s Assembly.

Final word, one thing you are taking away from the session?

Table 5 - Lesson plan session 2

As a critical feminist, my role was to create the conditions for dialogue where I would participate but also ask problem-posing questions. Session 2 was characterised by this approach during rich, organic conversation that stemmed from the simple question ‘tell us about the work that you do’. We learned about a national campaign against the privatisation of Ireland’s National maternity hospital (Fitzsimons, 2022a, n/p); the ongoing fight for abortion access in Northern Ireland; those working to improve services in parts of Ireland with no GPs prescribing abortion pills; the work of independent doulas, and campaigns to improve maternity care. As well as authentically listening and learning, I posed questions like ‘why is our maternity hospital being privatised?’ or ‘why do some people have access to abortion and others don’t?’ and importantly in the context of critical pedagogy ‘what has economics got to do with all of this?’. I was modelling what Connolly (2008) explains as where “the adult educator and the learners enter a dialogue about their lived experience”, where the facilitator

relates what participants share “to the macro elements of society, that is, the big picture, drawing on their knowledge base” (p. 51). Sometimes more discussion ensued and people shared resources often using the zoom chat function (see appendix 6).

Follow up materials from session 2.

As is evident by my post-session email, I made sure to include all resources and references provided by other group members and took time to prime people for the third session which would focus on trans rights; something requested by some participants, but also important within a critical feminist space that is led by the ideology articulated in chapter 1.

Hi Everyone,

Thanks for your participation last night, I was wrecked afterwards.

As promised here are some resources. Again I have attached my plan (you will see we didn't get to everything) and also the chat from Teams, thanks [name] for the reminder. The link to the talk with Sinead [Dr Sinead Kennedy] and Maeve [Dr Maeve O'Brien] is imbedded in the Power-Point.

I have also attached the report I mentioned by the Irish Council for Civil liberties that talks about government groups self-censoring in the run up to the referendum particularly of artistic expression. And I have attached chapter 5 of my own book which explains the situation regarding the NCCWN on the first couple of pages. Obviously no obligation to read any of it but it's there if anyone wants it.

Thanks [name] for sharing your insights on the Ms B case, if people want to read a synopsis of this it is in the chapter on reproductive oppressions that I circulated after our first week page 32-33. My understanding is that there has recently been a second case of a woman in Mountjoy Prison but it is not being reported on much and I am not sure of its status. I too was involved with AIMS for a while and they have some good information on situations like these <http://aimsireland.ie/>

There's also a piece in that chapter circulated after the first week about trans rights which we will be talking about next week, if you have any questions or prompts you would like me to pass on to Noah [outreach worker with TENI] in advance let me know. Scroll down and you'll see his profile <https://www.teni.ie/meet-the-team/>, you can also read more about the work of TENI here. I have also written quite a bit about the aftermath of the referendum in terms of the General Bill that was introduced pre-referendum which [name] raised last night, I don't want to overwhelm people but let me know individually if you want this chapter also.

Next week, I hope to start with a bit of a focus on what is happening in Texas and Poland as there are important nuances that are good to illuminate particularly with reference to activist work before handing over to Noah.

In our last week, [name] from (real)productive Justice will come in and talk to us about disability rights and repro rights. I haven't been able to source anyone from Migrants and Ethnic Minorities for Reproductive Justice (MERJ) so this might be a gap in the overall programme – apologies, or one of you might be in touch with someone who could share their insights and experiences through this lens?

Happy Thursday 😊

Camilla

Table 6 - Post session communication and materials week 2

Post course evaluative comments specific to this session

In the post-course anonymous evaluation (appendix 4) a number of people made particular reference to this session. Two (of six) people commented on the collective learning from other people's activism:

I was most interested in learning about the experiences of other activists and the history of what has been happening in Ireland, as well as getting more up-to-date information on the situation now in ROI and NI.

And,

The 'why am I here/why am I still a reproductive rights activist' exercise and discussion ... was a really good way to connect to not only the organising I do but the activism and organising that other people in the group are doing as well. It was a refreshing way to get to know people and served as a reminder of the brilliant work being done by feminists across the island.

There were also comments on the shortfalls in Irish law I presented. This was done by using videos that were available online by two other activists namely Sinead Kennedy of the Coalition to Repeal the eighth amendment and Maeve O'Brien of Alliance for Choice. My decision to use these videos rather than present contents myself was to again lateralise power by removing me from a 'lecturing role' as much as possible, but also to introduce people to resources they too could circulate to others. This aspect of the session was praised in two post-course comments, "I found the content that engaged me the most was reproductive justice in the Irish and local context and particularly the segment on the limitations of the legislation and how it was drawn up. I realised that while I am interested in the historical developments, it is the present day issues and problems and how to find solutions that I feel most engaged with".

4.3 Trans rights are human rights (session 3)

*My third week, my third walk. J***s ran over again so it was twenty-five past nine when we finished, all but one person there tonight...I am learning a lot, I guess if I was doing it a second time I would do it differently. I think four weeks is very short, it should be a year ... maybe there is something in that, maybe I could design a cert course in it or something like that? Ye, maybe we should have a certificate course in feminist studies – there you go, there a new idea, I am going to pitch that a work, a certificate in feminist studies as part of our continuing education programme and I will teach it. There you go, there is an output. (research diary, 26th January, 2022)*

There were two elements to session 3; an overview of current events in the US that were eroding reproductive rights then dedicated time that was given over to the national community development officer with community an invited facilitator from the Trans Equality Network Ireland (TENI) national community development coordinator who led a session on ‘Trans Healthcare’.

Session 3- Overview and check-in

Straight into breakout groups to check in with groups of 4 then hear back as to how people are and what questions they have.

Introduce the videos:

1. Explain roe v wade
2. Explain what happened in Texas.
3. Explain the implications.

Welcome speaker from TENI and hand over to them.

Closing session, one thing that you have taken from the session.

Table 7 - Lesson plan week 3

In invited Trans Equality Network Ireland (TENI) into the space by sending the following email:

Hello to the TENI team,

I am getting in touch to see if you might be interested in helping out with an online course I am running on reproductive rights and reproductive justice. I'm running the course through ARC and fifteen people have signed up from across a range of groups. I have attached more information [advertisement appendix 1]. My request is to see if someone from TENI might come along for an hour and facilitate a discussion on RR and RJ and trans gender/non-binary experiences. The dates I have in mind are the 18th, 26th or January or the 2nd of February (I am not sure which one yet) and it would be evening time so 8pm-9pm. Because I am doing this voluntarily I would not have a budget to pay anyone so I would also be seeking voluntary input (hope that is okay).

Camilla

I was put in touch with a member of staff and we had an online meeting during which I told them more about the group. Inviting others into the space raises questions about the notion of ‘ally’. Benny LeMaster (2018, p. 155) shares their “*healthy cisspicion* of allies and the broader organizing structure known as the ally industrial complex” explaining “this cispicion is the result of corrective affective and intellectual labors even as we work to preserve and amplify

trans and gender non-conforming (TGNC) peoples voices, embodiments, communities, and subjectivities”. Le Master locates at least some of the blame with increasingly prevalent and frequently reductivist ‘diversity training’ (something also criticised by Sara Ahmed, 2017, pp. 89-160 and Stephen Brookfield, 2018, pp. 298-299) which mostly fails to engage with those at the centre of a phenomenon. The result, they claim is “a conceptual, fragmented, and immaterial framing of transness as oppose to a sustained dialogic engagement in and through transness in its perpetual becoming across contexts (Le Master, pp. 155-6). This ideology influenced my decision to give time to TENI without directing them in any way. Wanting to describe myself as an ‘ally’ may stem from good intentions to be supportive, but declaring myself an ‘ally’ does not make necessarily make this a reality, that is for others to decide; what I can do is put myself on the line as much as I can (Brookfield, 2018, p. 308). It is also crucial to adopt a praxis-oriented, intersectional attitude to being an ‘ally’ meaning reflexively inquiring into how our own actions can erase intersectional difference (LeMaster, p. 157). The input from TENI’s speaker had a profound impact on me and, true to the philosophy of TENI, they noted the intersectional nature of inequality as they told their own story. Others too were deeply moved as was clear in our closing round ‘what are you taking from the session’ which we invited our guest from TENI to participate in. My research diary somewhat captured this,

I think everyone was a bit overwhelmed. I learned a lot from listening to [name]... definitely when you listen to actual people talk it, it demystifies things and brings it out of that vacuous hole that is the internet. It just makes it more human. (Research diary, 26th January)

Follow up materials session 3

Once again, my correspondence illuminates the dialogic nature of our evening and a gap between how I advance planned and the actuality of the evening.

Hi everyone,

Thanks again for your amazing participation yesterday, weren't we so privileged to have [name] with us. Below my email you will find a note she sent on with references. I have also attached a copy of her PowerPoint and also the one I used which has the videos regarding Roe V Wade and the Heartbeat law embedded. There is also a video we didn't get to on the impacts of the Texas law on the ground. Following up from our discussions here are two articles from the Irish Examiner that might be of interest.

This first one is about the influx of money to anti-abortion activists groups in the US [Anti-abortion group sees surge in donations ahead of US Supreme Court ruling \(irishtimes.com\)](https://www.irishtimes.com/news/anti-abortion-group-sees-surge-in-donations-ahead-of-us-supreme-court-ruling-1.4612345)

This second one is about the complaint Ronan Mullan put into Maynooth about my research on Safe Access Zones and the robust statement Maynooth released in response: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/arid-40362572.html> Never so grateful for laws on academic freedom!

Finally, and very sadly, in case people missed, it here is the case that [name of participant] told us about in Poland. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/jan/26/poland-death-of-woman-refused-abortion>

Hard to believe that next week is our last week! Get back to me if there is anything that we haven't talked about that you would really like us to spend some time on.

Camilla

Table 8- follow up materials session 3

4.4 Summary overview and (real) productive rights (Final session).

One of my first observations for the last session was that, for the first time, I didn't have a written plan to guide the session. I thought about pretending I had one for the purposes of this thesis then owned a more authentic response which was to check my assumptions about always needing a written plan, something I regularly preach to my education students at Maynooth University. I did have a plan, the evidence of which is in the PowerPoint I prepared (appendix 9). This was to summarise weeks 1-3 then ask people to contemplate the question,

“where to now in terms of your own activism”?

I regret not capturing people’s responses but I am confident this was so that I could be fully present in the moment and not scribbling notes whilst people talked. I remember a general sense people felt more engaged; so much so that they decided to continue meeting as a group in my absence. At the time of writing, I don’t know the status of this group.

Before closing the group, and following the same logic as my decision to invite TENI, the organisation ‘Re(al) productive) Justice’⁷ gave an input she called *Reproductive Rights and Disability*. Again people gave positive feedback and appeared profoundly impacted. Two post-course anonymous comments read,

The presentations by and Q&A sessions with [name] from TENI and [name] from Re(al) Productive Justice were engaging as well as informative and showed me not only the gaps in my knowledge but the gaps in my organising. I’ve been thinking of ways to take what I’ve learned and use it in practice ever since.

And,

Learning about disability and the discrimination that people experience in relation to motherhood. It really opened my eyes to how disability discrimination is more than just the 'obvious' things and how so much of it directly relates to reproductive justice. I appreciated how open and generous the speaker was with her time and responding to our questions.

Final communication and materials

Overleaf, you will find my final communication to group members.

⁷ See <https://realproductivejustice.com/> for information on the work that they do.

Hi Everyone,

Thanks again for being part of the group, I really enjoyed it and learned a lot from you all. It has spurred me on. I've attached the final set of materials – I haven't got the PowerPoint from Re(al) productive Justice but will send this on when I can.

In the interim I attach the Zoom chat and also the short PowerPoint that I used to summarise the programme. I've also attached a slide on the Alliance image that [name] spoke about and include explanation text provided to me by the Alliance. The artist's name is Helen McDonnell.⁸

In terms of my own research, thank you so much to those of you who volunteered to take part in a one-to-one interview. I have decided NOT to do these interviews. This is a pragmatic decision to manage my own workload. Instead it would be really great if everyone could complete the online [Evaluation of the course](#) which is similar to what you completed at the beginning and which I will draw from in my academic publications.

For those of you commented on my book, thank you – available in all good bookshops 😊 At the moment, I am writing my third book, this time on Gender-based violence which sadly (but also positively in terms of influencing change) has become very topical. It's along the same lines in that it gathers stories from activists and ordinary people and, like repeal, argues that change comes from struggle.

Let me know if you want to hear more.

Thanks again, really appreciate your time and hope the course was what you hoped it would be.

Camilla

Table 9 - Final email communication and resources

My final diary entry included the comment,

Tonight was very weird in that, I mean the course was brilliant and everyone was really grateful and I think that is has kind of helped me to expand my comfort zone and confidence to teach more about this stuff in the future. Just because I am so long teaching education and this is stuff that I do actually know a lot about so ye, I look forward to doing more of this in the future. Of course I now have to write it up into a thesis, I'll send an email tomorrow saying I'm finished the field work which is great. It's a bit of a weird one: four weeks is not long enough, two hours is not long enough, maybe there can be something longer from this, let's see what happens. (Research diary, 2nd February, 2022)

⁸ Demonstrating cross-over across the Masters programme, I only had this information to hand because of an assignment I did for the module Art, Gender and Identity which I completed in semester 1.

Chapter 5 – Impacts, insights and ways forward.

This research brought together a group of activists so they could learn from each other, engage with theories and concepts surrounding reproductive rights and reproductive justice. Specially it asks,

In what ways can an inclusive, feminist pedagogy inform, support and equip reproductive rights activists as they seek to preserve and improve reproductive rights.

The event took place at a time when reproductive rights are under attack in many countries across the globe but also at a time when policy reform in adult and community education has led to a sharp neoliberal-led pivot away from community-led, politicising models in favour of individualist, employability models.⁹ Neoliberalism has co-opted much education where free thinking and liberatory ideas have become a commodity to enhance material success and to ensure hegemonic consent (hooks, 2004, p. 16). This shift has been so profound, many women's community education groups chose not to take a stance in the 2018 referendum to legalise abortion on demand for fear this might jeopardise state funding (Fitzsimons, 2021, pp. 90-91). This didn't mean there was no pedagogical element to feminist campaigning rather that this role fell to non-funded, voluntary organisations. ARC, Alliance for Choice, and Parents for Choice were just some of the many group who organised politicising, pro-choice, participatory workshops (Fitzsimons, 2022, pp. 7-10). This isn't necessarily a bad thing. According to Brid Connolly (2008, p. 6), feminist pedagogy,

thrives among self-directed community activists, and it succeeds because it is of the community and for the community. It opens the doors to learning that probably had been closed in mainstream education, and these doors lead to subjects that are awe inspiring, meaningful to people's lives and pleasurable.

This final chapter provides as yet unshared feedback from those directly involved referencing their thoughts about the pedagogic approach. I then devise a set of guiding principles that might lead the way both for own future work and for others who seek to create critical, feminist-pedagogic spaces.

⁹ See Murray, Grummell, & Ryan, 2014 for comprehensive discussion on this that is beyond the scope of this study.

5.1 Participant thoughts on my feminist pedagogy.

As previously revealed, just six people completed my anonymous post-course questionnaire (appendix 4). When I asked about the points at which people felt least engaged practical issues emerge namely the challenges of watching videos online in real time and concerns that the course was too short. When I asked about the points at which people felt most engaged, comments related to group discussions as captured in this comment “I really enjoyed the analysis of information. I can google the info anytime but it was people's analysis of it and personal perspectives that I found most valuable” but echoed by others.

Two questions more deliberately probed about pedagogy the first of which asked, “*now that the course is over, what are your overall thoughts about being part of the group?*”. Across all six answers people were positive about how, as one person put it, they “really enjoyed meeting other activists”, and from another, how “the bonding and sharing has enriched my motivation and resolve to continue in this area”. There was positive affirmation for my role and for the labour involved in creating certain conditions for learning:

It was a gentle, safe space with some fantastic activists involved. Camilla was fantastic at guiding discussion, making people feel comfortable and confident to speak their truth and to connect the dots. It had a good balance between theory, discussion and to consider future activism.

There was also evidence of a shift in perspective as a direct result of the process I used. This person begins “I can’t remember my exact answers in the pre-course questionnaire” then continues,

but I’m pretty sure I said something about being worried about feeling like I didn’t know enough to be able to participate fully in the course which was an unfounded fear because the learning space you and we, as a group, created allowed for questions to be asked in good faith and have them answered with kindness.

A second question asked “what comments do you have, good or bad, about the 'feminist pedagogy' (meaning teaching style) that I used?” This question elicited some of the most lengthy responses which I have reproduced in full.

It was really worthwhile. Very different teaching style to what I'm used to and I loved it. I'm hoping that we can continue to engage with each other and keep up to date with what different groups are doing. Helped to reinforce how everything is so

interconnected and how building up networks and drawing on other people's expertise and experience is so crucial to activism - collective action.

From someone else,

I really enjoyed being part of the group and the bonding and sharing has enriched my motivation and resolve to continue in this area. It also highlighted for me the importance of meeting and discussing the deeper aspects of this work alongside what may usually be considered the more practical aspects of reproductive activism. What could be more practical than listening to each other and learning in a caring environment? It only has the potential to enhance every aspect of the work - can help prevent burnout or fatigue and bring clarity and efficiency to the external work, while increasing understanding of other's positions and circumstances and providing better support for each other.

This contribution eased a concern I had about not focusing enough on the skills-based elements of activism by reminding me that one of the best ways to 'teach' skills is to model particular ways of being. And again, in this lengthy contribution,

Looking at the course as a whole - from the initial introductions to the final session - the dynamic of the group, facilitated under the almost imperceptible direction and gentle guidance from the facilitator, formed a major part of creating a trusting and open environment where more than just traditional learning could occur. Trust was nurtured slowly, by checking in with everyone at the beginning and end of each session; clear boundaries were set from the beginning and could be revisited and amended at any time if needed to provide security for all participants. Confidentiality and consent were always emphasised and maintained and the unique way the sessions were facilitated allowed surprising amounts of in-depth conversations in addition to the more formal aspects of information and analysis on the course.

They continue,

My primary aim in coming on the course was to get an overview of reproductive justice through the lens of feminist history and fill in the huge gaps in my knowledge. What I got was so much more - the ease with which trust was nurtured and maintained allowed for much listening to other's experiences and finding it easy to contribute personal insights or experiences also.

This study therefore suggests that feminist pedagogy can and does support and nurture collective activism; something central to the fight for reproductive rights given how reproductive rights are rarely, if ever, bestowed upon us rather they must be fought for. This isn't a new phenomenon rather the recently overturned US supreme Court decision to protect the right to abortion was first introduced because of a what Leslie Reagan (1997, p. 217)

describes as “a mass movement for women’s reproductive rights” that developed as part of wider anti-war and civil rights activism. In the UK, grassroots activism led to the legalisation of abortion in the 1960s (Jones, 2011, p. 285), a pattern that was replicated across the globe in from the 1960s onwards, a period which saw much relaxation of legal restrictions. Amidst today’s backlash against reproductive and other rights that principally impact women, there are mass feminist movements developing around abortion rights, sexism and gender-based violence across the globe including the Ni Una Menos (Not One Woman Less) movement against femicide and machismo in Latin America (Coppinger, 2021, p. xv), in many Muslim majority countries (Hessini, 2016, pp. 76-77) and in many African countries (Mkhize & Nwabisa, 2019, p. 9)

5.2 Articulating core principles of critical feminist-pedagogy.

It is true that there is no one definition of feminist pedagogy and that to articulate one would presume authority, stifle innovation, and privilege certain perspectives. However, critical feminist pedagogy does involve taking a stance, and for this reason, I am suggesting five core principles that, in the final analysis, guided my practice.

Critical feminist pedagogy....

1. Seeks to demolish intersectional systems of inequality.

Throughout her writings, bell hooks consistently uses the phrase *white supremacist-capitalist-patriarchy* to continually remind us of the interconnected nature of the systems that define our lives. As hooks (1989, pp. 50-51) maintains,

Feminist pedagogy can only be liberatory if it is truly revolutionary because the mechanisms of appropriation within white supremacist, capitalist patriarchy are able to co-opt with tremendous ease that which merely appears radical or subversive.

Unless we interrupt patterns, these same forces will define our classrooms; spaces that have been institutionally ruled by masculine markers and liberal feminism. Absent from hooks assertions are ableist privileges which must also be problematised if we are to adopt a truly revolutionary pedagogy.

2. Challenges traditional models of education.

Despite decades worth of academic literature that critiques banking approaches to education, most contemporary classrooms continue to be dominated by an environment where the knowledgeable educator pours fixed ideas into the minds of passive learners.¹⁰ These environments are a significant site for the inculcation of heteronormative gender norms (Heyder & Kessels, 2013) and they stigmatise and exclude transgender and non-binary people (Sayre Smith, Schacter, Enders, and Juvonen, 2018; Tubbett, 2022, n/p). The alternative problem-posing environment isn't without its own shortcomings and it is important not to falsely dichotomise 'banking' and 'problem-posing models' and to remember how much theorising about critical pedagogy remains abstract and disconnected from the social movements academics often talk about. This research shows that it is possible to create these spaces.

3. Creates communities of learning that validate personal experiences and analyses these within a social context.

Traditional models of education not only maintain the status quo, they can be profoundly damaging for the individuals involved and it is not uncommon for people to leave the school system with an erroneous set of internalised beliefs about their intellectual capacity, afraid to speak up and with a strong sense of inadequacy. 'Truth', we are told, derives from theories and the subjective is best suppressed. Participatory feminist pedagogy makes spaces people to "occupy the centre of their own stories" (Metta, 2015 p. 503), understands the power of the subjective and sees the value of diverse voices. Through this personal we can deconstruct problematic theoretical assumptions that alienate many people by making the world 'less real' rather than 'more real' (hooks, 1989, p. 51). Creating a safe space doesn't mean not challenging dominant ideas, in fact the opposite is often required where patriarchal norms invade these spaces, a facilitative approach including small group work and group agreements (see section 4.1.1) enables challenges to behavioural norms and create conditions for all voices and not just those that are typically dominant to be heard.

¹⁰ It was very significant for me that the feminist pedagogic I encountered on the Masters in Gender and Women's studies was predominantly participatory and problem-posing.

4. Sees ‘praxis’ as a central feature of the process.

Critical pedagogy’s central focus is to encourage activism beyond the classroom walls through a complex of action and reflection, or *praxis*. bell hooks (1992, p. 146) explains,

One of the concepts in Freire’s work and in my own work that is frequently misunderstood by readers ... [is] many times people will say to me that I seem to be suggesting that it is enough for individuals to change how they think ... Again and again Freire has had to remind readers that he never spoke of conscientization as an end itself but always as it is joined by meaningful praxis ... praxis is not blind action, deprived of intention or of finality. It is action and reflection.

It is this emphasis on praxis, that has resulted in many adult educators locating critical pedagogy as a force within social movements (Horton & Freire, 1990, pp. 199-201; Connolly, 2008, pp. 35-36; Kane, 2012, pp. 69-83). Being part of the group undoubtedly re-energised some participants. One activist captures this sentiment when they write,

It was difficult at times, to see how many of us are still hurting and feeling burnt out but to not feel so alone in that. It has reenergised me and I have really given a lot of consideration as to what is next in terms of my own activism. I have stepped back from some work that I was able to see was not the best use of my time, and to look at ways to better spend it on just a few projects that I am most passionate about.

5.3 Reflection on my own learning from the process.

Deep, personal reflection on our performance as group leaders is frequently underappreciated amidst the ongoing dominance of enlightenment philosophies within western epistemology (Brookfield, 2017, p. 69). According to Toyosaki & Pensoneau-Conway (2013, p. 560) the autoethnography I have infused through this study is fundamental to social justice. “This may seem contradictory” they write, given its individualist tendencies, then continue, “while social justice may be fundamentally social, our argument for autoethnography as the praxis of social justice entails an examination of the self who engages in social justice/responds to social injustice”. The task they set for me, is to be mindful of performative moments and continually connect with the power I hold to interrupt “the minute moments of social injustice that permeate our everyday identity performances, and hoping for a better world with other in our lives” (p. 561). Reading this sentence helped me find a home for one participant quote that had a particular impact on me. It reads,

This might not sound like a huge deal, but activist and feminist spaces can often be about one-upmanship and proving that you are the best and most informed feminist activist that there is no room for knowledge and skills sharing because people are afraid to raise their hand and ask for clarification on whatever it was they didn't understand.

My initial response was to vigorously nod my head in agreement. My more contemplative reaction is to turn the mirror on myself and wonder if this could apply to me. In what ways do I seek to be the 'best and most informed feminist activist'? As I occupy this role, whose hand remains firmly by their side?

There have undoubtedly been tangible praxis-oriented outcomes from my decision to run this programme, and more particularly, my decision to analyse the process. I have since designed and delivered a series of once-off workshops to new volunteers within the Abortion Rights Campaign. In September 2022, I hope recruit for a level 8 certificate in *Feminisms and Social Activism*. I would not have designed this certificate course if it had not been for this process. At a deeper level this experience has reignited a persistent imposter voice. The structural and gendered nature of this subjectively felt emotion (see section 2.3.1) has perhaps been one of the most useful insights I have gained.

5.4 Conclusion.

There seems little doubt but that the people who engaged in this collaborative process learned from each other, from me, and from the theories and readings we collectively introduced. Writing this thesis has taken me back to dark evenings we spent together, divided by geography but connected through technology. Together our voices were alive and insightful, our energy was invigorating. It is essential that we continue to carve out spaces like these as the recent reversal of *Roe* by the US Supreme Court ripples across the world. A decision Amnesty International asserts would create a situation where "anti-rights groups could seize upon around the world in a bid to deny the rights of women, girls and other people who can become pregnant" Overturning *Roe v. Wade*, has, they claim "become the symbol of a major backlash all over the world, putting recent progress at risk and endangering the health and lives of millions" (Amnesty International, 2022).

Bibliography

- Martin, B., & Coy, P. G. (2017). Skills, training, and activism. *Reflective Practice*, 18(4), 515-525.
- Amnesty International. (2022, May 3). *If confirmed, US supreme court decision could endanger abortion rights across the world*. Retrieved August 21, 2022, from Amnesty International: <https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/if-confirmed-supreme-court-decision-could-endanger-abortion-rights-around-the-world/>
- AONTAS. (2009). *Flower Power: Guide to best practice in Women's Community Education*. 2009: AONTAS. Retrieved August 11, 2022, from https://www.aontas.com/assets/resources/Community-Education/flower_power_womens_community_education_qaf.pdf
- Armstrong, E. (2021). Marxist and Socialist Feminisms. In N. A. Naples, *Companion to Feminist Studies* (pp. 35-52). Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated.
- Arruzza, C., Bhattacharya, T., & Fraser, N. (2019). *Feminism for the 99%*. Verso books.
- Aziz, R. (1997). Feminism and the challenge of racism. Deviance or difference? In H. S. Mirza, *Black British Feminism. A Reader* (pp. 70-77). London: Routledge.
- Barr, J. (1999). *Liberating Knowledge, research feminism and adult education*. Leicester: NAICE.
- Briggs, L. (2017). *How all politics became reproductive politics: from welfare reform to foreclosure to Trump*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.
- British Educational Research Association. (2018). *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (4th ed.). London: BERA. Retrieved June 30, 2022, from <https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018-online>
- Brookfield, S. (2017). *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* (2nd ed.). New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Brookfield, S. (2018). *Teaching Race: How to Help Students Unmask and Challenge Racism*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons Incorporated.
- Brooks, A. (2006). Feminist standpoint epistemology, building knowledge and empowerment through women's lived experience. In S. Hesse-Biber, & P. L. Leavy, *Feminist Research Practice: A Primer* (pp. 53-82). California: Thousand Oaks, Sage.
- Browne, B. (2013). Recording the Personal: The Benefits in Maintaining Research Diaries for Documenting the Emotional and Practical Challenges of Fieldwork in Unfamiliar Settings. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 420-435. doi:10.1177/160940691301200121
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble*. New York: Routledge.
- Cahill, C., Quijada Cerecer, D. A., & Bradley, M. (2010). "Dreaming of ...": Reflections on Participatory Action Research as a Feminist Praxis of Critical Hope. *Journal of Women and Social Work*, 25(4), 406-416.
- Carey, M. (2012). *Qualitative Skills for Social Work: Theory and Practice*. London and New York: Routledge.

- Carroll, R. (2022, May 4). Abortion Services in Northern Ireland almost non-existent despite legislation. *The Guardian*, p. 2022. Retrieved August 16, 2022, from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/04/abortion-services-in-northern-ireland-almost-nonexistent-despite-legalisation>
- Chuang, C. H., & Weisman, C. S. (2019). Taking Aim at Contraceptive Coverage — The Trump Administration's Attacks on Reproductive Rights. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 993-995. doi:10.1056/NEJMp1815738
- Coffey, C., Espinoza Revello, P., Harvey, R., Lawson, M., Parvez Butt, A., Piaget, K., . . . Thukkdan, J. (2020). *Time to Care, unpaid and underpaid care work and the global inequality crisis*. Oxford: Oxfam .
- Collins, S. (2018, May 28). The abortion issue has convulsed the country repeatedly since the 1983 referendum. *The Irish Times*. Retrieved June 12, 2022, from <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/thirty-five-years-of-war-bitter-legacy-of-eighth-amendment-1.3510303>
- Connolly, B. (2001). *Women's Community Education in Ireland*. Dublin: One Step Up. Retrieved from http://www.onestepup.ie/assets/files/pdf/womens_community_education_in_ireland.pdf
- Connolly, B. (2008). *Adult Learning in Groups*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Cornelius-White, J. (2007). Learner-Centered Teacher-Student Relationships are Effective: A metaanalysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 113-143.
- Craddock, E. (2019). Doing 'enough' of the 'right' thing: the gendered dimension of the 'ideal activist' identity and its negative emotional consequences,. *Social Movement Studies*, 18(2), 137-153.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: a Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics" . *University of Chicago Legal forum.*, 139-168.
- Currier, D. (2020). Feminist Pedagogy. In N. A. Naples, *Companion to feminist studies* (pp. 341-356). New York: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated.
- De Londras, F. (2020). Intersectionality, Repeal, and Reproductive Rights in Ireland. In S. Atrey, & P. Dunne, *Intersectionality and Human Rights Law* (pp. 125-146). Harte Publishing.
- Della Porta, D., & Diani, M. (2010). *Social Movements: An introduction* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Denzin, N. (2014). *Interpretive autoethnography* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- Eddo-Lodge, R. (2017). *Why I'm no longer talking to White People about Race*. London: Bloomsbury Publications.
- Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., & Bochner, A. P. (2011). Autoethnography: An Overview. *Forum Qualitative Social Research*, 12(1).
- Fetters, A. (2019, June 10). Men Aren't Quite Sure How to Be Abortion-Rights Activists. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved August 18, 2022, from <https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2019/06/men-abortion-debate/591259/>

- Fitzsimons, C. (2017). *Community Education and Neoliberalism: Philosophies, Practices and Policies in Ireland*. Zurich: Palgrave-Macmillan.
- Fitzsimons, C. (2021). *Repealed, Ireland's ongoing struggle for Reproductive Rights*. London: Pluto Press.
- Fitzsimons, C. (2022). Critical education in the Irish repeal movement. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 1-17. doi:10.1080/02660830.2022.2077532
- Fitzsimons, C. (2022a, May 01). 'Nun' of your business #MakeNHMOurs' Blog #2. Retrieved from Camillafitzsimons.com: <https://www.camillafitzsimons.com/post/nun-of-your-business-makenhmours-blog-2>
- Fitzsimons, C., & Kennedy, S. (2021). Ireland's Dark History of Injustices Against Women. In C. Fitzsimons, *Repealed, Ireland's ongoing fight for reproductive rights*. (pp. 45-64). London: Pluto Press.
- Fraser, N. (2009). FEMINISM, CAPITALISM AND THE CUNNING OF HISTORY. *The New Left Review*, 56, 97-117.
- Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London and New York: Penguin.
- Guttmacher Institute. (2022). *United States Abortion*. Retrieved August 16, 2022, from Guttmacher Institute: <https://www.guttmacher.org/united-states/abortion#>
- Guttmacher Institute. (2022b). *Unintended Pregnancy and Abortion Worldwide - Fact Sheet*. New York: Guttmacher Institute. Retrieved May 29, 2022, from https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/factsheet/fb_iaw.pdf
- Harvey, D. (2005). *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Heron, J. (1999). *The Complete Facilitator's Handbook*. London: Kogan Page.
- Hessini, L. (2016). Reclaiming and Reframing Sexual Rights in Muslim Majority Contexts: The Role of Individual and Collective Movements in Shifting Patriarchal Discourse and Practice. *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 22, 69-80.
- Heyder, A., & Kessels, U. (2013). Is School Feminine? Implicit Gender Stereotyping of School as a Predictor of Academic Achievement. , 69(11-12), 605-617. *Sex Roles*, 69(11-12), 605-617.
- Holborow, M. (2021). Revisiting Engels –History, Gender and Class. *Irish Marxism Review*, 10(30), 10-19. Retrieved August 15, 2022, from <http://www.irishmarxistreview.net/index.php/imr/article/view/424/409>
- hooks, b. (1982). *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. London: Pluto Press.
- hooks, b. (1984). *Feminist theory from margins to center*. Boston: South End Press.
- hooks, b. (1989). *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. Boston: South End.
- hooks, b. (1992). Bell Hooks speaking about Paulo Freire, the Man, his Work. In P. & Leonard, *Paulo freire : A critical encounter*. . Taylor and Francis Group.
- hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to Transgress: education as the practice of freedom*. New York: Routledge.
- hooks, b. (2010). *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom*. New York and London: Routledge.

- Horton, M., & Freire, P. (1990). *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change*. (B. Bell, J. Gaventa, & J. Peters, Eds.) Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Jackson, S. (1997). Crossing borders and changing pedagogies from Giroux and Freire to feminist theories of education. *Gender and education*, 9(4), 457-468.
- Jones, E. L. (2011). Attitudes to Abortion in the Era of Reform: evidence from the Abortion Law Reform Association correspondence. . *Women's History Review*, 20(2), 283-298.
- Kacpura, K. (2018). SERIOUS THREATS TO REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS IN POLAND. *Arrows For Change*, 24(1), 26-27.
- Kagan, C., Burton, M., & Siddiquee, A. (2017). Action Research. In C. Willig, & R. S. Wendy, *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology* (pp. 55-73). California: Thousand Oaks.
- Kane, L. (2012). Forty Years of Popular Education in Latin America: Lessons for Social Movements Today. In B. L. Hall, D. E. Clover, & J. Crowther, *Learning and Education for a Better World: The Role of Social Movements* (pp. 69-83). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Kennedy, S. (2021). *Meeting the Needs of Every Woman*. Dublin.: The National Women's Council of Ireland.
- Kirkwood, C., & Kirkwood, K. (2011). *Living Adult Education: Freire in Scotland* (2nd ed.). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Latter, P. (2013). Post-Critical Pedagogies: A Feminist Reading. In C. Luke, & J. Gore, *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy* (2nd ed., pp. 120-137). New York: Routledge.
- Leavy, P., & Harris, A. (2019). *Contemporary Feminist Research, from theory to practice*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- LeMaster, B. (2018). (Un) Becoming Ally: Trans at the Intersections of Difference. *Women and Language*, 41(1), 155-158.
- Letherby, G. (2003). *Feminist Research in Theory and Practice*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Professional Publishing,.
- Lyotard, J. F. (1984). *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge*. Minneapolis : from the French by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. University of Minnesota.
- Manne, K. (2017). *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny*, . USA: Oxford University press .
- Marx, K., & Engels, F. (2018). *The Communist Manifesto*. Minneapolis: Lerner Publishing Group.
- May, T. (2011). *Social Reserach, Issues, Methods and Process* (4th ed.). Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- McLaren, P. (2009). Critical pedagogy: A look at the major concepts. In A. Darder, P. Darder, R. Baltodano, & D. Torres, *The Critical Pedagogy Reader*. London & New York: Routeldge.
- McRobbie, A. (2020). *Feminism and the Politics of Resilience: Essays on Gender, Media and the End of Welfare*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Mirsa, J., Lundquist, J. H., Holmes, E., & Agiomavritis, S. (2011). The Ivory Ceiling of Service Work. *Academe*, 97(1), 22.

- Mkhize, G., & Nwabisa, M.-N. (2019). The impact of women's movements' activism experiences on gender transformation policies in democratic South Africa. *Agenda*, 33(2), 9-21.
- Mojab, S. (2015). *Marxism and Feminism*. London: Zed Books Ltd.
- Murphy, D. (2020). Repealed the Eighth: Self care for reproductive rights activists in Ireland. *Interface: a journal for and about social movements*, 12(1), 420 – 436.
- Murray, M., Grummell, B., & Ryan, A. (2014). *Further education and training, history, politics and practice*. Kildare: MACE Press.
- O'Boyle, B., & Allen, K. (2021). *Tax Haven Ireland*. London: Pluto Press.
- O'Neill, M., & Roberts, B. (2020). *Walking methods. Research on the move*. London: Routledge.
- Paul, O. (2010). *Student's Guide to Research Ethics* (2nd ed.). Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Pujol, E. (2018). *Walking Art Practice, Reflections on Socially Engaged Paths*. London: Triarchy Press.
- Reagan, L. (1997). *When abortion was a crime: women, medicine, and law in the United States, 1867-1973*. University of California Press.
- Reis Brandão, E., & Cristiane, d. (2019). Sexual and reproductive rights under attack: the advance of political and moral conservatism in Brazil. *Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters*, 27(2), 76–86.
- Richards, J. C., & Miller, S. K. (2005). *Doing Academic Writing in Education : Connecting the Personal and the Professional*. New York, London: Routledge.
- Robson, C. (2011). *Real World Research: A Resource for Users of Social Research Methods in Applied Settings*. Chichester: Wiley Publications.
- Robson, C., & McCartan, C. (2016). *Real World Research: A reserach for users of social research methods in applied settings*. London: Wiley.
- Rogers, C. (1989). A Philosophy of Persons. In H. Kirshenbaum, V. L. Henderson, H. Kirshenbaum, & V. Henderson. (Eds.), *The Carl Rogers reader, selections from the lifetime work of America's Preeminent Psychologist, author of on becoming a person and a way of being*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Rosenau, P. M. (1991). *Post-modernism and the social sciences: Insights, inroads, and intrusions*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Ross, L. J., Roberts, L., Derkas, E., Peoples, W., & Bridgewater Toure, P. (2017). *Radical Reproductive Justice*. New York: Feminist Press.
- Ross, L., & Solinger, R. (2017). *Reproductive Justice: An Introduction*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Rottenberg, C. (2018). *The rise of neoliberal feminism*. New York : Oxford University Press.
- Ryan, A. B. (2001). *Feminist Ways of Knowing*. Leicester : NAIC publications.
- Ryan-Flood, R., & Rosalind, G. (2009). *Secrecy and Silence in the Research Process : Feminist Reflections*. New York: Routledge.

- Salem, S. (2018). Intersectionality and its discontents: Intersectionality as traveling theory. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 25(4), 403-418.
- Sarantakos, S. (2013). *Social Research*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC.
- Sayre Smith, D., Schacter, H. L., Enders, C., & Juvonen, J. (2018). Gender Norm Salience Across Middle Schools: Contextual Variations in Associations Between Gender Typicality and Socioemotional Distress. 47, 947–960. *Journal of Youth Adolescence*, (47), 947–960.
- Siliman, J., Ross, L., Gutierrez, E. R., & Gerber Fried, M. (2004). *Undivided Rights: Women of Color Organize for Reproductive Justice*. Jael Silliman, Marlene Gerber Fried, Loretta Ross, and Elena R. Gutierrez.
- Stopper, A. (2006). *Monday at Gaj's: The Story of the Irish Women's Liberation Movement*. Dublin: The Liffey Press.
- Sullivan, S. (2001). *Living across and through skins, Transactional bodies, Pragmatism and Feminism*. Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Taylor, J. (1998). Feminist Tactics and Friendly Fire in the Irish Women's Movement. *Gender and Society*, 12(6), 674-691.
- Taylor, Y., & Breeze, M. (2020). All imposters in the university? Striking (out) claims on academic Twitter. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 1-8.
- Thamar, M. H., Finnborg, S. S., & Thorgerdur, E. (2017). Academic career making and the double-edged role of academic housework. *Gender and Education*, 29(6), 764–780.
- Toyosaki, S., & Pensoneau-Conway, S. (2013). Autoethnography as a Praxis of Social Justice: Three Ontological Contexts. In S. Holman Jones, T. E. Adams, & C. Ellis, *Handbook of Autoethnography* (pp. 557-575). California: Sage.
- Tubbett, C. (2022, July 14). *Thinking about queer-inclusive teaching and learning*. Retrieved August 27, 2022, from InspireD: <https://academic-practice.com/2022/07/14/thinking-about-queer-inclusive-teaching-and-learning/>
- UK Government. (2021). *Abortion Statistics England and Wales*. Health and Social Care. London: Gov.UK. Retrieved August 10, 2022, from <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/abortion-statistics-for-england-and-wales-2021/abortion-statistics-england-and-wales-2021>
- van der Tuin, I. (2011). Gender Research with 'Waves'. On repositioning a Neodisciplinary Apparatus. In R. Buikema, G. Griffin, & N. Lykke, *Theories and Methodologies in Postgraduate Feminist Research : Researching Differently* (pp. 15-28). New York: Routledge.
- WHO. (2022). *Abortion Care Guidelines*. Geneva: World Health Organisation. Retrieved May 29, 2022, from <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240039483>
- Wrigley, T. (2017). Canonical knowledge and common culture: in search of curricular justice. *European Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 4(1), 536-555.

Interested in a short, online course on Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Justice?

My name is Camilla, and I am hosting a free, online course for activists in the reproductive rights movement. The course will take place online, using zoom. It will run for four weeks, Wednesday evenings from 7pm-9.30pm beginning on the 12th of January 2022 until the 2nd February.

What is the style of delivery?

The course will be delivered using highly participatory, hands-on methods that recognise diversity in learning styles. Although there will be some short inputs and some suggested readings, the overall emphasis will be facilitative meaning people will be encouraged to draw from and share the knowledge and experiences each of us bring to any learning space.

What is the overall framework?

The course uses feminist based, consciousness-raising methodologies with an emphasis on the socio-cultural and political dimensions. Together we will focus on three core domains:

1. **Theory** – enabling a strong theoretical grasp of the ideas underpinning reproductive health, rights, and justice in their broadest sense.
2. **Skills/Practice** – enabling us to explore different ways of working within social movements.
3. **The Self** – enabling an excavation of our own biographies as activists to understand these in the context of our current practice.

People should leave the process feeling more resourced, and more resourceful, in responding to the demands of activism.

How do I sign up or ask more questions?

If you would like to find out more and/or sign up to the process, email me on fitzsica@tcd.ie.

It would be great if people could let me know if they are interested by the 15th of December. The places will be limited to a maximum of 15.

More about me.

I am a full-time academic with the department of Adult and Community Education, in Maynooth University. You can see my full profile at this link: <https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/people/camilla-fitzsimons>. I am the author of *Repealed: Ireland's unfinished fight for Reproductive Rights* (2021), *Community Education and Neoliberalism* (2018) and lots of other publications on social activism and social justice.

I hold a teaching qualification in adult learning and a PhD in Adult and Community Education. I also have a background in nursing. I've been volunteering on ARC's policy and advocacy group since Spring 2020 and have been involved on and off in other ways since 2015. Over the years I have facilitated many groups including feminist groups and activists' groups and I currently coordinate Initial Teacher Education in Adult Education for Maynooth University.

Appendix 2 – Information and Consent form



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

Information and Consent Form

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. My name is Camilla Fitzsimons, and I am a student on the Masters in Gender and Women's Studies at Trinity College Dublin. As part of the course, I am undertaking this research which will be supervised by an academic member of staff at Trinity College.

If you are reading this information sheet you will have signed up for an online course in Reproductive Rights. Simultaneous to delivering the course I am carrying out some research that hopes to capture the impacts of the course and to find out more about activist motivations more broadly. **Please note participation in the research aspect of this initiative is ENTIRELY OPTIONAL. You are more than welcome to take part in the education course and not participate in the research.**

If you do want to take part in the research, there are two ways to get involved:

1. You can complete one or both online questionnaires using a link I have sent to all course participants. These questionnaires are anonymous, so I will not know whether you take part.
2. You can opt-into an additional confidential one-to-one audio recorded interview which will be carried out using the online platform zoom. In this interview I will ask you more about the course, but I will also ask you broader questions about your experience as an activist in the reproductive rights arena and your motivations for getting involved.

If you are interested in taking part in an interview, please email me at fitsica@tcd.ie

I will not share your identity with anyone and nobody on the course will know that you have opted into this aspect of the process. If you decide to volunteer for an interview, you need to sign the adjoining consent form. All consent forms will be saved in a secure, password protected location on my PC. I will be the only person with access to these forms. The research will be written up and presented as a masters thesis as part fulfilment of the MA in Gender and Women's Studies in Trinity College. A copy of this thesis can be provided if you would like one. I may also present findings at academic conferences and may publish a peer-reviewed academic article.

At the end of the interview, I will discuss with you how you found the experience and how you are feeling. If you would like to find out about counselling services relating to abortion you can contact the HSE freephone number 1800 828 010. If you require support about maternity care you have experienced you can contact the Association for Improvements in Maternity Services (AIMS) support team on support@aimsireland.com. If you need any further information, you can contact me at fitsica@tcd.ie

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Camilla Fitzsimons'.

Dr Camilla Fitzsimons

Appendix 3 - Pre-course questionnaire

Page 1: Information on the course and this questionnaire

Thank you for signing up for the course Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Justice. The course will be delivered using highly participatory, hands-on methods that recognise diversity in learning styles. Along with some short inputs, possible guest speakers and suggested readings, a lot of the contents will be determined by you, the participants. For this reason I am inviting each of you to anonymously complete some questions about your hopes for the course that will help me devise the structure and contents.

I'm also evaluating the course in real time for a Masters in Gender and Women's Studies I am doing with Trinity College. For this reason I will ask your permission to include your answers in a thesis and a peer-reviewed academic article. I won't ask you to agree to this until the end of this questionnaire and I genuinely don't mind if you prefer your answers not to be included. The most important thing is that you fill out this questionnaire so I can design a course around people's hopes. Your answers will not be shared with other group members and there is no way for me to know your identity.

Finally, I will give you information on how to opt into an additional one-to-one interview about your wider work as an activist. Again this is totally optional, and you don't have to decide now rather you must email me separately if you are interested.

1. What are your reasons for signing up for this course?
2. What do you hope we cover/talk about?
3. What unanswered questions (if any) do you have that you are reluctant or embarrassed to ask in wider activist spaces?
4. What are the things that you are most curious to find out more about?
5. What fears (if any) do you have about taking on this course?
6. What else would you like to say?

Thank you so much for your ideas and suggestions for me to mull over.

If you are interested in participating in an online one-to-one conversation about your wider work as an activist please email me at fitsica@tcd.ie. Our conversation would be audio-recorded but you will get a chance to revise the transcript after the interview and make any changes you want. The sorts of things I would ask you about are your reasons for becoming an activist, your reasons for staying involved and the highs and lows of being a reproductive rights activist.

Camilla

Dr Camilla Fitzsimons

Appendix 4 – Post course questionnaire.

Hi Everybody,

Thanks so much for participating in the four-week online course Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Justice.

If you have the time, I would really appreciate your participation in this anonymous questionnaire. Don't forget, what you write may be used in a masters thesis and/or a peer reviewed academic article on the role of education in activism

Camilla

1. Now that the course is over, what are your overall thoughts about being part of the group?
2. What are the aspects of the programme content that you felt most connected to/most interested in?
3. What were the aspects of the programme content that you felt the most disengaged with/least interested in?
4. What comments do you have, good or bad, about the 'feminist pedagogy' (meaning teaching style) that I used?
5. What should change if the course is being repeated?
6. What (if any) was the personal impact for you when you think through the lens of social activism. For example has it helped clarify what you are doing, influenced a change of direction, confirmed your decision to stay out of activist-circles; stimulated you to become more involved, anything else that you can think of that will be helpful in me evaluating the impact of a programme like this.
7. Finally, is there anything else that you would like to say that i haven't thought to ask?

Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Justice

Session 1 – 12th January 2022

Anxieties in a group



Will I be accepted? - When a person is new to a group, they may wonder about the other people there and ask themselves - *“Will I fit in with these people? Will they accept/reject me?”*

Will I understand? - Another worry is that you won't understand what people say or mean, - *“maybe I haven't been an activist for that long, maybe I've been involved for ages and should know this stuff?”*

Will I be able to participate? - People in a new group often ask themselves *“If I am asked a question will I know the answer? If we have to do something, will I make a fool of myself? Maybe I won't be as 'good' at the task as other people.”*

Will it be relevant/interesting? – Most people have a lot going on in their lives and time is a precious resource – we need to feel there is a value in what we are doing and might ask ourselves *“is this course going to be of any use? Will it just be a waste of time? Maybe I will just be bored and won't be able to use any of it afterwards.”*

1. What can the group do to lessen these anxieties?
2. What can Camilla do to lessen these anxieties?

Overview of the four weeks

Week 1 – Introductions, overview and discussion on reproductive health, rights and justice.

- The current Irish and international experience.
- the trans, non-binary and non-gender conforming experience.
- ‘Migrant’ experiences of reproductive oppression.
- Disability and reproductive rights.
- Feminism, activism, shared learning.

A reproductive Justice Framework

Reproductive Health services: sex education, fertility treatment, contraceptive care, maternity care (inc., pregnancy termination), childbirth, menopausal care.

Reproductive Rights: laws that prevent or support access to reproductive health.

Reproductive Justice: a much broader movement that illustrates fundamental and consolidative structures that impact a person's capacity to make reproductive choices.

Loretta Ross

[What is reproductive Justice?](#)



Resources you might like:

Film: Never Rarely Sometimes Always - directed by Eliza Hittman has just been added to Netflix

Websites:

[SisterSong](#)

[Centre for Reproductive Rights](#)

Readings:

Fitzsimons, C., 2021. *Repealed, Ireland's ongoing struggle for Reproductive Rights*. London: Pluto Press. Chapter 2 Ireland's Reproductive Oppressions.

Ross, L. J. et al., 2017. *Radical Reproductive Justice*. New York: Feminist Press. Chapter 1 – Introduction.

Appendix 6 – Excerpt from group chat during a session (with pseudonyms)

19:59:09 From Angie she/her to Everyone:

<https://www.imt.ie/opinion/high-court-decision-on-rights-of-mother-in-respect-of-unborn-child-23-11-2016/>

19:59:52 From Catherine (she/her) to Everyone:

It doesn't affect them.

20:00:46 From Natalia to Everyone:

Joe Rogan, similarly extremely problematic yet has one of the highest grossing podcasts

20:02:08 From Orla to Everyone:

There's an enormous capacity in the States for the rancid misogyny peddled by Rogan.

20:20:08 From Catherine (she/her) to Everyone:

Mary, I really appreciate you sharing that Stephen [Donnelly, Minister for Health] is so adamant against SAZs. Explains a lot.

20:20:50 From Orla to Everyone:

I didn't know that he had such a stand against them.

20:23:32 From Catherine (she/her) to Everyone:

National Collective of Community-Based Women's Networks www.nccwn.org

20:24:10 From Catherine (she/her) to Everyone:

<https://nccwn.org/>

20:24:40 From Angie ∞ she/her to Everyone:

exactly Catherine, thank you

20:24:56 From Mary to Everyone:

Yes, I keep meaning to look into that organisation.

Sinéad Kennedy

- [The trouble with Republic of Ireland law](#)



Ancillary recommendations of the Citizen's Assembly

Improvements should be made in sexual health and relationship education, including the areas of contraception and consent, in primary and post-primary schools, colleges, youth clubs and other organisations involved in education and interactions with young people.

Improved access to reproductive healthcare services should be available to all women – to include family planning services, contraception, perinatal hospice care and termination of pregnancy if required.

All women should have access to the same standard of obstetrical care, including early scanning and testing. Services should be available to all women throughout the country irrespective of geographic location or socio-economic circumstances.

Improvements should be made to counselling and support facilities for pregnant women both during pregnancy and, if necessary, following a termination of pregnancy, throughout the country.

Appendix 8 – PowerPoint used in session 3

- [Explaining Roe V Wade](#)

McGee v. The Attorney General (1973)



Why this matters...

Incremental overturning of Roe V Wade through *Targeted restrictions on abortion providers* - 'TRAP laws'.

The Supreme Court is considering a Mississippi law that bans abortions after 15 weeks. If this is upheld, next in line is Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Kansas.

Is this not the same tactic being used in Ireland, Poland and other countries?



Week 1

Anxieties in a group.

Will I be accepted, will understand, will this be relevant, will I make a fool of myself.

Differences between reproductive health, rights and justice.

- The right to have children
- The right **not** to have children
- The right to **parent** safely and in a manner of your choosing

Week 2

More about the work that we each do.

The shortfalls in Irish laws (north and south).

The ancillary recommendations of the Citizen's Assembly:

1. RSE in schools and colleges
2. Improved access to reproductive healthcare services; Contraception, fertility etc.
3. Equal access to quality obstetric care.
4. Improvements should be made to counselling and support facilities for pregnant people.

Week 3

Roe V wade and its relationship with the eighth (the McGee Case)

TRAP laws.

Lilith - **#Transrightsarehumanrights**

Across all weeks

Check-ins and check-outs.

Drawing contents from as much as *presenting contents to*.

Follow up resources based on our discussions

Where to now in terms of your own
activism?

