



THE IRISH WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT

The Contraceptive Train and the struggle for contraceptive rights in 1970's
Ireland



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Declaration

Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of the MA in Journalism & Media Studies is my own; based on my personal study and/or research, and that I have acknowledged all material and sources used in its preparation. I also certify that I have not copied in part or whole or otherwise plagiarised the work of anyone else, including other students.

Signed:

Patricia Madden Dated: 4th August 2016

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Abstract

The topic of this radio documentary is that of the Irish Women's Liberation Movement (IWLM) founded in 1970. Particular attention is given to The Contraceptive Train Protest of 22nd May, 1971 carried out by the movement.

The documentary focuses on the short life span of the movement and how it tackled the issue of contraception in an Ireland where the sale and distribution of family planning aids was illegal. This was done most notably through the Contraceptive Train protest and subsequently through legislative reform in the later 1970's and into the 1980's.

Though the movement operated for a brief period, it achieved a lot in terms of consciousness-raising for the people of Ireland, particularly for women. The members of the IWLM began the conversation that saw the initial unravelling of the constitutional and religious impact felt by women Ireland.

While this is a famous era and movement of Irish history, the movement was disbanded in the Autumn of 1970 and so the voices of its members have not been brought together very often as a collective in this manner. 1970's Ireland was a time when media coverage of women's issues was scant and often condescending or patriarchal in tone. This documentary celebrates the members of the movement. It also looks to gain an insight into them as individuals so as to better understand their motivations and feelings about their life roles as activists.

Through the use of interviews with three of the movement's founding members: Nell McCafferty, Mary Kenny and Dr Eimer Philbin-Bowman, the documentary showcases first-hand experience of Ireland's answer to the second wave of feminism brought about by its sister movement in the United States.

The documentary also features commentary from Senator Ivana Bacik and Dr Mary McAuliffe, lecturer in gender studies at University College Dublin (UCD). Dr McAuliffe is a professional historian who contextualizes the movement while Senator Bacik provides the legal context for the issues tackled by the IWLM.

The Irish Women's Liberation Movement offers a fresh look at the second wave feminist movement in Ireland and what we as a society can learn from our predecessors. It is a respectful nod to the movement's members as well as a lesson to young women of today in the importance of social activism, particularly in the areas of women's rights and gender equality; where we were, where we are now, and what remains to be achieved.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The Irish Women's Liberation Movement (IWLM) was a thunderbolt through the Irish social consciousness of the 1970's. A curious group in its combination, the IWLM went onto affect contraceptive rights reform in the legislation of 1970's Ireland. Through its high profile members such as Mary Robinson (who went on to become the first female president of the Irish Republic), Nell McCafferty, Mary Kenny, Dr Eimer Philbin-Bowman, Maeve Binchy, Mairín de Burca and Mairín Johnston among others, the movement caught the attention of the country in which church and state still ruled the status of women.

While its organization may have been haphazard, ultimately fizzling out in a matter of months, the movement carried out radical protests that saw them at the forefront of discussions on primetime platforms such as *The Late Late Show*.

As internationally renowned feminist Gloria Steinem puts it, patriarchy by definition is the control of reproduction. (Steinem, 2011) "Women's control of their reproduction is the biggest factor in determining her health, her lifespan, her education and career", says Steinem. She calls it a 'fundamental human right'. (Steinem, 2011) Irish women were living in a patriarchy, the repressive nature of which was dictated by the Catholic ethos of the founders of the Republic. The women of the IWLM, through their own consciousness-raising development brought contraception as a topic of discussion, into the homes of many Irish families.

Perhaps it was the 'sexiest' of the issues laid out in the movement's manifesto *Chains or Change*, but The Contraceptive Train protest is marked as the IWLM's most famous moment. On May 22nd, 1971, 46 members of the movement took the train to Belfast to purchase

contraceptives. Contraceptives were legally sold in Northern Ireland. In the Republic the sale and distribution of contraceptive products remained illegal. The pill was prescribed as 'a cycle regulator' often only to married middle-class women.

The IWLM decided to protest the law banning the sale and distribution of contraceptives by returning to Dublin customs officials with their contraband in tow, and refusing to hand them over. They were let through without challenge; as embarrassed customs officers were unsure how to handle the power of the group that had made sure to invite the world's media to capture the protest. As many of the prominent members of the group were journalists, the protest was strategically planned to take place on International Media Day.

This began a discussion on contraception that in the coming years led to the Health (Family Planning) Bill, 1979 (McCafferty, 2004) This bill allowed for the availability of contraceptives to those with a medical prescription and who held a satisfactory medical need for such products. This made it more widely acceptable to consult your doctor about taking the pill as well as other contraceptive measures.

The IWLM was a varied group of women and this is reflected in the documentary. They came together for a brief time in Irish history. Their impact on the culture of the time was immense but once this movement officially ended, they went their separate ways. This is not to say that their work as feminist individuals stopped there. They each went on to affect change and break taboos in their respective careers.

Of the women interviewed for the documentary, Nell McCafferty went on to work with further Irish feminist movements in the 1970's. She became increasingly well-known and often appeared in Irish media evoking feminist attitudes. She was a member of the more radical ff

shoot of the movement known as *Irishwomen United*. Mary Kenny, then women's editor of *The Irish Press*, went on to have a rich journalistic career. She is also a playwright and author and her work documents her ever increasing conservative attitudes. This is a far cry from her liberal days in the IWLM. Mary has since returned to her Catholic roots and writes regularly for *The Irish Catholic*.

Dr Eimer Philbin-Bowman is a psychiatrist and works with the Dublin Well Woman's Clinic in private practice of psychiatry. Eimer began her career with a medical degree but after the Marriage Bar stopped her from going on to complete her medical training in 1970, Eimer took the time to raise her family before eventually going back to do a Masters in Psychology. Her Master's thesis turned out to be very fitting for the social context. She surveyed a group of single women and their contraceptive habits in 1976. The sample was taken from participants attending the Family Planning Clinic in Dublin (opened in 1979) and showed that single women were not quite as conservative as the society in which they were living would like to think of them. (Bowman, 1977) Eimer may not always have been the one on the frontlines of protest but she certainly affected the status quo in other ways through her work with in the area of women's mental health.

It is clear now from having produced this documentary that social activism is not a black and white issue. The women of the movement were not always in agreement on the issues at hand. They came from different backgrounds; socially, economically and in terms of their education. They each had different priorities. However, they managed to come together at a time when women were still suffering the legacy of discriminatory laws prescribed in the Irish

Constitution that prevented them from gaining any independence in their individual lives, and certainly not in terms of their own sexual and reproductive health.

The IWLM forced onto the agenda the discussion on women's issues and, as such, began the journey to gaining improved legal status that continued up until the 1990's. This included contraceptive reform, the end of the Marriage Bar, restrictive property rights and the legalisation of divorce came into play. The social status of women has greatly improved since the days of the IWLM, however, there are still feminist developments to be made. This is namely the question of repealing the eighth amendment of the Constitution as it relates to the question of abortion and the rights of the unborn child. This would allow for full reproductive rights for women.

However, perhaps for having had a strong legacy of feminist activism in Ireland, future struggles for the cause will not be so difficult.

Chapter 2

Evidence of Research

This chapter records the research undertaken to complete this documentary. A range of sources have been consulted including books, recorded interviews, news articles, media archives and online sources. This research formed the basis for compiling interviews questions which are the backbone of the product.

Audience Interest

Audience interest in this topic is strong as feminism is at the forefront of societal debate just as much today as it was during the notoriety of the IWLM. This is not just in Ireland, but internationally. On one hand, feminism has become trendy, made in vogue by figures of popular culture. On the other hand, it has been criticised for much the same reason. Because many of the more radical issues of women's rights have already been achieved, there is a misconception as to the importance of continued action for equality.

Young women of today, in particular, may feel misguided and lost when it comes to establishing their feminist views in a time when there seem to be numerous interpretations of what it is to be feminist. A look at the IWLM and the humanisation of some of the iconic figures of the movement gives us the opportunity to relate to those involved and perhaps understand the multi-layered nature of feminism and the struggle for gender equality.

Television, literature, podcast and mainstream music is all representing this marketing of feminism as the new 'it' topic. From writers and producers like Lena Dunham (creator of the programme *Girls*) to musical entertainer Beyoncé and her theme of the sensual empowerment

of women; from podcast like the *BBC Women's Hour* to the *Irish Times Women's Podcast*, there is a surge of popular feminism in society.

History

The 1937 Constitution of Ireland used the terms 'woman' and 'mother' interchangeably as it laid out the role of women in the Republic. It prevented women from working outside of the home after marriage. This was upheld by the establishment of the Marriage Bar and the illegality of the sale and distribution of contraceptives in Ireland. (Beale, 1986, p. 7) Therefore, the status of women as having the primary role of reproduction and rearing of the family was enshrined in the mission statement of this country. Evidently, this left little room for women's individual freedom.

The formation of the Irish Free State in 1922 saw women gain equal voting rights to men. This was after decades of struggle by the suffragist movement that involved pioneering Irish women such as Hanna Sheehy Skeffington and Anna Haslam. (Kelly, 1996) While suffrage was won, laws were still in place that discriminated against women, including the above mentioned Marriage Bar and restrictions on property rights. (Luddy, 2012)

The first wave of the women's movement in Ireland is was from 1850-1921. The main issues addressed during this time were that of suffrage and it was heavily related to the nationalist movement. (Byrne, 1997, p. 552) While newly-independent Ireland saw a quietening of the women's movement for a number of decades, the traditional women's organisations remained active, such as the Irish Countrywomen's Association and the Irish Housewives

Association. The women in these organisations were seen as affecting gradual change and worked on developing women's existing position.

In comparison, the women of the IWLM were seen as activists and lobbyists. Dr Mary McAuliffe of UCD calls the interim of feminist development a more maternal feminism that aimed to gradually reform women's status in the home. Dr McAuliffe believes it may be a misnomer to call it a quieter period for feminism in the run up to 1970. These movements were just as effective and continued to be so. She suggests that 'the IWLM did not come out of a vacuum'. The second wave emerged after consistent work at grassroots level. (McAuliffe, 2016)

Radical questions remained around abortion, divorce and contraception as these were all areas of particular interest for women. (Beale, 1986, p. 11) The Censorship of Publications Act 1929 made it illegal to publish, sell or distribute literature advocating birth control. Criminal Law Amendment Act 1935 made it illegal to sell or import contraceptives. (Beale, 1986, p. 8) Subsequently, the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1935 prohibited the sale and importation of contraceptives. Also the Conditions of Employment Act 1935 allowed the government to prohibit women from working in certain industries and fixed the proportion of female workers in other areas. Women had gained suffrage, however, the laws still in place greatly compromised their liberty. The Constitution then summed up that Irish women's function was in the home: "the Catholic family (and the subordinate status of women within it) was laid as the foundation stone of the new State." (Beale, 1986, p. 9)

In 1960's and 70's Ireland, the use of contraceptives was a disguised activity. Generally, only middle-class married women 'in-the-know' about contraceptive options were in a position to procure contraceptives from their doctor as a 'cycle regulator'. Those most affected by this were working-class women and single mothers. However, organisations are beginning to be

established to help women in this regard.

In 1969, the first family planning clinic opened in Dublin. (Beale, 1986, p. 106) They got around the law by taking donations for payment and so they were not technically selling contraceptives. In 1978, 48,000 women were estimated to be using the pill as a cycle regulator. (Beale, 1986, p. 106) All of these developments were not without cultural opposition. For example, Archbishop McQuaid of Dublin said in 1971 that “to speak [...] of a right to contraception [...] is to speak of a right that cannot even exist.” (Beale, 1986, p. 12) This is due to the Catholic and Constitutional reliance on natural law as one that is for the benefit of everyone. (Beale, 1986, p. 12) The doctrine of the Catholic Church dictated that women would not be given control over their bodies and so Catholic families were left with basic means of family planning. It subsequently encouraged sexual repression.

However, the 1970's saw an overall positive change in the situation for Irish women. While this change was gradual and hard won, it was a change for the better. Ireland joined the European Economic community (EEC) in 1972 and this provided many opportunities for Irish people to prosper. Ireland was being influenced more and more by its neighbours in the UK, on the continent and in the US. Liberation was in the air. The Marriage Bar was removed in 1973 and was followed by legislation on equal pay in 1974. This meant that women had a greater chance to pursue paid work and opened up the prospects of lasting careers giving them the opportunity to be financially independent of their husbands and to provide for themselves.

In 1973, the McGee vs Attorney General case took place. It led to legislation that stated the right to privacy of a married couple included the right to import contraceptives for their own use. (Beale, 1986, p. 106) Mrs. McGee could not use the pill because of a heart condition, another pregnancy would put her life at risk, and so she decided to import spermicidal jelly to use with a

diaphragm. The jelly was confiscated by customs. She was backed by the Irish Family Planning Association and her case was brought to the High Court on the grounds that the 1935 Act was unconstitutional as it interfered with a couple's private life. The High Court initially dismissed the case but it was successful in the Supreme Court. (Beale, 1986, p. 107)

Some years later in 1979, The Health (Family Planning) Act was brought in by Charlie Haughey, then Minister for Health. He famously, and somewhat regrettably, referred to it as "an Irish solution to an Irish problem" (Beale, 1986, p. 107) The movement's own Mary Robinson was instrumental in ensuring the passage of the act into legislation.

It was argued that the state and the weak stance of many politicians on the topic of contraception was just as much to blame as the influence of the Catholic Church. Two archbishops of the Church in Ireland during the 1970's stated that, while contraception went against Catholic morality, this did not mean that the state must coincide with that on every matter. (Beale, 1986, p. 108)

The Catholic Church defended itself in saying that there are many moral teachings of its doctrine that it has not insisted upon the State. However, this matter was one of grave importance to the female population; even if the gravity of it was not fully understood at the time

The use of contraceptives in Irish society was not because contraceptives themselves were changing the climate; it was the result of wider societal changes for women at the time. (Beale, 1986, p. 109) It can also be argued that the law had a great effect mainly on working-class women, and that those who were better off did not suffer because of it.

Many other developments were made in laws affecting women during this period and many due to the work of the IWLM and its members. The AIM group for deserted wives was set up by movement member, Nuala Fennell, in 1972 (Collins, 2009) as well as the Cherish group

for single parents in the same year (OneFamily, 2016); the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre was established in 1979. (Beale, 1986, p. 11) Improvements in supported maternity leave were made in 1981 aiding the entry and re-entry of women into the workforce and thus beginning to bridge the gender gap in employment. The Contraceptive Action Programme campaigned to get a Working Women's Charter accepted by trade unions. (Beale, 1986, p. 11)

The emergence of a movement

Contraception, and beginning the debate on further reproductive rights, was essential in that for women to gain equality in society they must first have control over their own bodies. The medical profession, that was predominantly male, had primary control over women's medical processes and procedures; especially that of childbirth. (Byrne, 1997, p. 251) There is the hypothesis that the medical process of childbirth was masculinised by doctors and the traditional role of the midwives was changed. (Byrne, 1997, p. 252) it suggests that women have been treated largely as reproductive machines in the development of obstetrics by the patriarchal profession.

The topic of the educational and cultural gap between female healthcare professionals and women of the Travelling community, for example, leads to an imbalance of power favouring the doctor. This translates to the situation for working-class women across Irish society. The issues of disparity among the social classes was recognised very early on by the IWLM when it came to social and medical care. (Byrne, 1997, p. 252)

Members such as Nell McCafferty use to visit women in the Ballymun flats, for example. They spoke to the women about the issues of procuring contraceptives as well as highlighting the lack of awareness of how to implement them. It also demonstrated the plight of the women, many of whom were single mothers raising children in overcrowded conditions. (McCafferty, 2004)

While the State played a role in the definition of motherhood, there was an invisibility of women's first-hand experiences of reproduction and their lives as mothers. (Byrne, 1997, p. 254) The idea that the constitution would dictate so strongly the life role of women was highlighted as ludicrous by Senator Ivana Bacik in her interview for this documentary. She points out that it is always vital to legislate women's rights. (Bacik, 2016)

Manipulation of women by fertility control advisers is argued to be an issue for lower-class women or those belonging to a minority. In these cases, the implementation of contraceptives, sterilization and abortion may be used as a means of population control. (Byrne, 1997, p. 268) The argument is that family planning and reproductive methods can be used for or against women depending on the woman's background. Therefore, a truly liberating reproductive politics is one that supports every women's choice. (Byrne, 1997, p. 268)

The IWLM 'contained five demands: equal pay, equality before the law, equal education, contraception and justice for deserted wives, unmarried mothers and widows.' These demands were outlined in their manifesto *Chains or Change*, an original copy of which is held in the library at Trinity College. (Department of Education and Science , n.d.)

Few women claimed to participate in the IWLM on 'behalf of other women' (McCafferty, 2004, p. 220) It did not start out as a call to protect the disenfranchised and voiceless. Many of the women were middle-class and educated. They each had felt a certain amount of discrimination, and at varying degrees; but many of them went along as young and excited rebels as is alluded to by Nell and Mary in their interviews and autobiographical writings on the subject.

Many of the movement members cite the book *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan as a cause for change in their thinking towards the situation for women. Dr McAuliffe explains that emigration figures were high at the time and so women would come home to visit on holidays

from the UK or US and bring back literature like that of Friedan's. It had the effect of consciousness-raising. *The Feminine Mystique* outlined what Friedan called the problem with no name'. This referred to the inexplicable discontent felt among American housewives as she saw them in the 1950's. Their roles as wives and mothers often required them to leave behind their careers and individual interests and so left their daily lives somewhat void of fulfilment.

During her interview for this documentary, Dr Eimer Philbin-Bowman recalls a summer she spent as a teenager in Venice. The younger girls for whom she acted as au pair were a part of a Bohemian set in Venice and she would go along with them and their friends to socialise. Eimer became close with the only other native English speaker hanging around with the group; an Australian girl a few years her senior. She found her to be very sophisticated and forward-thinking. This girl turned out to be the now famous feminist figure, Germaine Greer.

Other writings of the time, such as *Sexual Politics* by Kate Millet (published in 1969), looked at the role that the patriarchy plays in the cultural attitudes towards sex. It illustrates this through studying the work of authors such as D.H. Lawrence and Henry Miller, arguing that their work is sexist in tone. All of this second wave literature articulated the growing sentiment among women at the time. This content filtered through to women such as the members of the feminist movement whose minds were ever developing in their beliefs in the importance of feminist values.

The Contraceptive Train

One bishop Dr Ryan, celebrating mass at Knock Shrine at the time of the protest, stated from the altar: 'Not since penal times, he said, had the Catholic heritage of Ireland been subjected to so many insidious onslaughts, on the pretext of conscience, civil rights and women's liberation.' (McCafferty, 2004, p. 224) Such opposition seems to be to the amusement

of Nell to this day. This is indicative of the culture of the day and what the women were up against, particularly in Ireland beyond Dublin.

The movement started with twelve women in September 1970, a national television audience in March, 1971 and a crowd of thousands in April at the Mansion House. But this dropped to forty-seven for the Train protest. (McCafferty, 2004, p. 223) Contraception rose to the fore as The Contraceptive Train protest was organised for 22nd May, 1971. It is described by the members featured in this documentary as an 'imaginative stunt' as well as 'sensational'. It was strategically held on International Media Day and so a welcome committee of other movement members as well as cameras from all around the world, was arranged for those arriving back to Connolly Station with contraceptives in tow. Definitive change in legislation did not come till the late 1970's, however, it was a successful exercise in consciousness-raising for the nation.

Nell McCafferty claims the protest as her brainchild. The lower number of participants was reflective of the attitude towards contraception (and any issues that drew attention to sex) in Ireland at the time. Many participants were nervous and apprehensive. As it spoken of in the documentary by both Nell and Mary Kenny, there was a sense of embarrassment and worry around what their mother's think at the sight of them on television. Dr Eimer Philbin-Bowman admits that she simply could not afford to take the risk of taking part in the protest. She had already been held back in her career by the Marriage Bar, she knew that having the protest on her résumé would diminish her chances of getting a position to work at St Vincent's Hospital where she was applying to.

A formal list of instructions was given out to the participants on the day. These dictated particularly how they were to navigate their arrival to Connolly Station and went as follows:

1. Declare nothing and risk being searched

2. Declare contraceptives and refuse to be searched
3. Declare contraceptives and refuse to hand over
4. Declare contraceptives and hand over with protest of infringement of your constitutional rights
5. Declare contraceptives and throw over barrier to sisters waiting beyond [...] shortened
6. Declare contraceptives and sit down in anticipation of customs action
7. Declare internal contraceptive. Allow search from female officer only and shout 'April fool' before entry

(McCafferty, 2004, p. 222)

Nell McCafferty cites founding member Mairín Johnston as a shining example on the day. She did not shy away from customs officials upon their arrival to Connolly. She walked right up to the desk and declared what she was carrying, and refused to hand it over. She can be seen in RTE *Reeling in the Years* footage declaring a tube of spermicidal jelly to a dumbfounded customs officer. Mairín Johnston may be seen as the basis of the inspiration for this documentary. As producer and interviewer of this piece, my interest in the topic stems from an interview I conducted with Mairín Johnston in 2009.

I formed part of a History project I was undertaking at the time and marked the beginning of my passion on this topic.

Chapter 3

Editorial Decisions

This documentary is a narrative on the women of the IWLM, their feelings around the movement, and a look at the situation for women today. In order to relate the documentary to the modern climate, modern music with feminist tones is used. The music selection came about as a result of asking interviewees about their musical preferences. It was also important to create an air of revolution through the music used.

Design Concept and Construction

The documentary form of radio is a style that has somewhat gone out of fashion. Radio documentary is a long form product that the listener must commit to in order to gain the full effect of it. However, we live in a society that is focused on speedy media consumption. For this reason, the podcast format has taken off as it allows listeners to dip in and out of a programme without losing much meaning.

'It [radio] is invisible and once it's gone, it's inaudible. You can't hold up a radio program and look at a bit of it. You can't freeze a bit of a radio program and just listen to a bit of it. You can't stop it in time. It has to be experienced.' (Aroney, 2005) (McHugh, 2014)

This quote from Aroney applies to the *Irish Women's Liberation Movement* documentary as it is a topic that has to be listened through to the end. It is a window into the time of the IWLM that can shed light on feminist issues of today for listeners. Siobhan McHugh is an oral historian, documentary-maker and professor of journalism at the University of Wollongong, Australia. She categorises the Crafted Oral History Radio Documentary (COHRD) as a genre unto itself. She writes that this genre is a 'blend of oral history, art and radio journalism'. She believes in the

narrative power of long-form radio and how it can be creatively enhanced in its treatment.
(McHugh, 2003)

This why this subject matter deserves to be dealt with in this format. It establishes a strong narrative comprised of the voices of those directly involved. These women are now in the later stage of life and so their voices are very rich in wisdom and experience.

'The Ability of the spoken word to communicate ideas and understanding is at the heart of human communication. The propensity to take that word and to fashion them into stories is central to that process.' (Dubber, 2014)

The design of this product is very much based around the voices of the women involved in the movement. A tone of revolution and modernity is sought in the presentation of this historical piece and is done so through the use of music and contributions made by Senator Bacik and Dr McAuliffe.

The documentary is designed as an historical piece with first-hand account of the IWLM and The Contraceptive Train as well as commentary from female figures and a women's studies expert of today. The documentary will emulate the air of activism and protest through the music chosen in between speakers. The documentary is minimally narrated. This is so as to give as much time to the contributors as possible. Its purpose is to simply introduce each speaker.

It was decided that historian and gender studies professor, Dr Mary McAuliffe, should take up the first segment of the piece so as to contextualise the subject matter and to give an initial overview of the topic. This is followed by the interviews with Nell McCafferty, Mary Kenny, Dr Eimer Philbin-Bowman and Senator Ivana Bacik, respectively. Nell McCafferty is considered one of the more well-known members and has worked as a feminist activist long since the

IWLM disbanded. Her interview was also one of the longest pre-edit and so priority in the line-up is given to this. Senator Ivana Bacik rounds up the content as she not only provides some of the legal context that followed the work of the IWLM but also a look to the current situation for reproductive rights in Ireland.

Interviews

Nell McCafferty

Derry born Nell McCafferty is a well-known Irish feminist and founding member of the IWLM. Her notoriety is as much due, as much to her provocative personality, as to her journalistic abilities. Nell grew up in during the Northern Ireland Troubles. She was involved with activist Bernadette Devlin, and many key figures of the Nationalist movement. Due to this, she was a trusted source on the topic when she was employed by the *Irish Times* in 1969.

(McCafferty, 2004)

She attended the foundational meetings of the IWLM and was a key contributor to the workings of the movement. She described in her autobiography that she felt immediately at home in the IWLM. She was empowered to 'not be outside the door while men decided' on social issues.

(McCafferty, 2004, p. 200) The IWLM did not incorporate the issues of Northern Ireland. Nell

went along with this as she felt it was important to make the 'Republic more attractive to northern Protestants. (McCafferty, 2004, p. 201) While her parents were aware of her

homosexuality, Nell had not come out to the rest of the movement as being lesbian. She says she was 'happy to just be in the door, never mind bring up gay rights'. (McCafferty, 2004, p.

202)

Nell is a controversial character in Irish media. She is known for her straight-talking, opinionated manner. Her contribution to this documentary was pivotal as she is perhaps the most famous of the group. The IWLM was but the beginning of Nell's feminist activism. She went on to take part in more radical Irish women's movement after the disbandment of the IWLM. These were the Women's Liberation Movement, Ireland (WLMI) and Irishwomen United.

I initially contacted Nell by sending her a letter. I had meanwhile interviewed Dr Eimer Philbin-Bowman, who is a friend of hers. She gave me Nell's mobile phone number and so I was able to make more direct contact with her.

Nell was interviewed at her home in Ranelagh, Dublin 6. It was recorded on an Olympus WS-853 digital voice recorder. Thankfully, atmosphere noise was kept to a minimum as Nell lives on a quiet road. As has been said above, I visited with her for an hour and a half and most of this was recorded. There was extensive material to edit to fit the documentary's timeframe. Her home is filled with photographs and memorabilia of her life and career. She happily showed pictures from the 1970's and 80's with figures such as current Irish president Michael D. Higgins.

Dr. Eimer Philbin-Bowman

I contacted Eimer through my supervisor Bernadette O'Sullivan as they are friends. Contact was made via email and we corresponded as such in the run up to the interview. Eimer was interviewed at her home in the Dublin 4 area. It was recorded on the Olympus WS-853 digital voice recorder in a quiet sitting room. This made for a very clear recording with little ambient noise. Eimer was very forthcoming and insightful in her account of her involvement in the movement, and also about her life in general. She was very generous in her interview.

Eimer questions her status as a founding member of the IWLM but most of her fellow movement member's would cite her as one. She went along to the first meetings with her friend, poet Eavan Boland. She did not take part in The Contraceptive Train protest as she had two small children at the time and, as she states in the documentary, she was not in a position professionally to take part.

In the final year of her medical degree, Eimer married and began a family. Having seen know obstacles to the progress of her medical career up to this point, she was shocked to discover that married women or mothers were not permitted to undertake an intern role, or any role in the medical field for that matter. Her applications to intern programmes (obligatory for her medical training) were all denied because of her family and marital status. This issue is what sparked Eimer's curiosity and willingness to get involved in the IWLM.

The aim in interviewing Eimer was to get the perspective of a member of the movement who seemed to become involved almost by accident. Eimer comes from a privileged background and studied medicine and later psychiatry. She is a liberal and progressive, however, she did not get involved in much of the more radical activism of the IWLM as she was concerned at the time that such involvement would make it more difficult for her to get a position in medicine. She was determined to take up her career once more when her children were older.

I wanted her perspective to be included to demonstrate the variety of women who were involved in the movement and how they each had diverse motivations for being there.

Mary Kenny

Through my supervisor Bernadette O'Sullivan, as well as through subsequent help from *Sunday Independent* journalist Kevin Flanagan, I was able to get contact details for journalist and

playwright, Mary Kenny. Contact was made via email and we continued to corresponded as such in the run up to the interview.

Mary was interviewed at her apartment in Dublin 2. The Olympus WS-853 digital voice recorder was used. The recording came across very clearly. However, due to the location of her apartment on a busy Dublin street, there was some ambient noise such as traffic. This was sporadic, however, and did not interfere with the strength of the interview.

Mary is known as one of the more colourful figures of the IWLM and a founding member. She is also a prolific journalist and playwright and a mind of knowledge on social history. She is outspoken and opinionated and I knew she would be an excellent contributor.

Mary is another one of the more well-known figures of the movement and her flamboyance is well recorded in her fellow member's accounts of the time. Interestingly, however, Mary reverted back to her conservative and Catholic origins as the years went by and had a change of heart on much of the liberal aspects of her youth as journalist and women's activist.

She is nonetheless a very open and empathic person judging from her interview and was a great help in contextualising the movement as well as provided her own personal account as a member.

Senator Ivana Bacik

Ivana is the Reid Professor of Criminal Law at Trinity College, Dublin as well as a senator representing the University of Dublin in Seanad Eireann. Ivana's role as Reid Professor is one previously held by founding member of the IWLM, Mary Robinson.

Mary Robinson was very much the legal brain behind the IWLM. She believed in social advancement for women through legal reform and was successful in achieving this. Ivana is a radical feminist and is a prolific campaigner for the pro-choice 'Repeal the 8th' campaign.

As president of Trinity's student's union (SU) in 1989-1990, Ivana and her fellow SU officers were brought to court by the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC) and threatened with a prison sentence for providing information on abortion to women facing crisis pregnancy.

Mary Robinson stepped in to defend the group and Ivana credits Robinson's brilliant legal argument for winning the case. This case led to a change in legislation that subsequently legalised the provision of information of abortion and other options for women with crisis pregnancy.

Ivana very much echoes the attitude of Mary Robinson as described by her fellow movement members, perhaps with a slightly more radical air. She was able to give an insight into what it was like to face the trials of such activism similar to that experienced by the IWLM in protests such as The Contraceptive Train. She was also able to provide the legal context for feminism in Ireland.

This interview was carried out at Ivana's office at Trinity College and recorded in the Olympus WS-853 digital voice recorder. The sound quality was clear with some slight background noise due to some construction work taking place outside. However, this did not take away from the quality of the interview as Ivana is an articulate and informative speaker.

Dr Mary McAuliffe

Mary is a professional historian and professor of gender studies at UCD. She is an expert in the areas of Irish women's history with special interests in political developments, war and revolution. Her recent publications include *Richmond Barracks 1916: We were There, 77 Women of the Easter Rising* and she is co-editor of *Kerry 1916: Histories and Legacies of the Easter Rising*.

Mary provided the context for the documentary as she was able to recount the period of time leading up to the IWLM as well as the aftermath, filling in the blanks of the historical and political context.

The interview was carried out at the National Library of Ireland where Mary was conducting research for a current article of hers. It was recorded on the Olympus WS-853 digital voice recorder. The background noise was an issue at times but the content of Mary's interview was pivotal to the documentary in terms of contextualization and so it works well.

Sound Effects

The sound effect used is that of a train. The sound of a train horn as well as that of trains on tracks are used during the interviews of Nell McCafferty and Mary Kenny to signify the point at which they speak directly about the protest of The Contraceptive Train. This allows for the division of interviews that keeps a lively tone and does not allow segments to become too heavy. The intention has been to keep a quick pace to the documentary without watering down content. The train sound effect as well as the music discussed below, allows for quick breaks in dialogue.

Music

Music was used for intros and outros as well as during transitions from one interview to the next.

The following songs are included:

Intro: 'Mother of Pearl' by Nellie McKay, a parody song performed at a TED Talks event. This is a very witty and upbeat piece that was fitting to open the documentary. It adds humour to the piece and eases in the listener to the subject matter.

Song 2: 'Just a Girl' by No Doubt is used between the interviews of Nell McCafferty and Mary Kenny. This is considered a feminist song from the alternative rock genre. It is used before Nell McCafferty's interview so as to introduce a more rebellious tone. The lyrics include: 'I'm just a girl / living in captivity [...] / oh I'm just a girl/ what's my destiny? / what I've succumbed to is making me numb/ [...] oh, I've had it up to here'

Song 3: 'You Don't Own Me' performed by Lesley Gore was released in 1963. This song is sung from the perspective of a young woman who is telling her lover that he does not control her. The song is associated with the second wave feminist movement in the US.

Song 4: 'Oh Bondage! up Yours!' by XRay Spex was released in 1977 and is an example of British Punk. It confronted the objectification of women.

Outro: 'Your Revolution' by Tony award-winning poet and writer, Sarah Jones, is used as an outro to the documentary. With this spoken-word song, the poet responds to the culture of misogyny in male-lead rap music. Tonally it brings calm to the end of the documentary. Lyrically, however, the message is very strong. The main line of the chorus is 'your revolution will not happen between these thighs'. This draws attention to female sexuality and thus contraceptive

and reproduction. It is brave and bold as a piece and adds a subtlety to the revolutionary tone as the documentary comes to a close.

Scripting

Interview questions were tailored to each of the five main subjects of the documentary. This was done through thorough research of the careers and backgrounds of each contributor.

I narrated the piece in order to introduce contributors. I scripted this and wanted to keep the narration to a minimum to give enough attention to the contributors while also helping to solidify the narrative.

Chapter 4

Evaluation

I worked on the basis of having a natural interest in the topic. However, the topic of feminism in Ireland is quite broad and goes before and beyond the time of the IWLM. It was difficult at times to keep this focus in interviews. The founding members interviewed are each of varying backgrounds and so bring varied perspectives on the era. The interviews extended into details of the women's other interests such as civil rights in Northern Ireland and the area of psychiatry and women's mental health.

It is a very layered process and involves a lot of organisation in setting up. I interviewed all contributors either at their homes, offices or elsewhere. These were fitted around the full time internship I undertook this summer and so meant that there was a lot to juggle. However, it came together well and I am happy with the material I got.

I used Adobe Audition audio editing software. I have used the Adobe creative suite for video and radio editing throughout my Masters as well as during my internship. Because of this I felt comfortable with the software which made that part of the process much more approachable.

In terms of the written aspect of this dissertation, the women's movement in Ireland is documented well through the fact that many well-known movement members are authors and journalists. Adding to this, the dedicated women's studies departments of colleges such as Trinity and UCD meant that there is a lot of research being done on the topic. I am an alumnus of Trinity College and so I have access to their library resources. This was helpful, for example, in getting to read an original copy of the IWLM's manifesto *Chains or Change*.

If I were to undertake this project again I would be more concise in my interviewing technique. I came away from each interview with a large amount of material. I asked background questions and some miscellaneous so as to make the interviewee feel more comfortable before delving into the main part of the interview. However, this meant that I had a large amount to edit which can lead to issues when cutting material. It makes it tricky as you want to make the content as thorough as possible while also keeping to time constraints. When cutting large amounts of material there is a risk of the narrative becoming esoteric. Caution has to be taken in ensuring that this does not happen.

Overall, however, I am very happy with the final content edit. The order of the narrative allows for each contributor to have their moment to tell their story. The introductory segment by historian Dr Mary McAuliffe contextualised the piece while Senator Ivana Bacik's piece at the end looks into the present situation and future developments of feminism. The women involved brought varied accounts of the movement and protest. Nonetheless they are all in agreement about the importance of the work of the IWLM and how The Contraceptive Train was highly impactful.

Conclusion

This documentary was thoroughly enjoyable to produce. I have been interested in this topic for many years and so to have the opportunity to interview some of the women involved was very exciting. It is a very layered process and involves a lot of organisation in setting up, editing and producing a final cut as well as maintaining progress on the written component. Overall, there were many aspects to consider from the traditional academic dissertation process.

However, I enjoyed the variety of methods used to produce the final product. It is a strong insight into feminism of the time and, hopefully, inspires feminists of today to continue to strive for gender equality and reproductive freedom for women.

I hope that it adds to the narrative of feminist history in Ireland and can encourage women of today to become more active and passionate about their feminist values.

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