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**'Her choice of course': Negotiating legitimacy of 'choice' in abortion rights
deliberations during the 'Repeal the Eighth' movement in Ireland.**

Abstract

Discourses of 'choice' are routinely involved in sexual and reproductive rights' advocacy. In this paper we offer a discursive psychological examination of how 'choice' is oriented to, in online deliberations on the ongoing movement for abortion rights in Ireland. Comment posters treated 'choice' as involving outcomes of and motives for choosing, in negotiating legitimacy of women's rights to choose. These accompanied alternative versions of women, either as independent or as intimately bound-up with pregnancy / motherhood, which were flexibly used in negotiation legitimacy of women's rights to 'choice' in abortion practices. Choice advocacy is then situated in particular discursive practices.

Key words: abortion; right to choose; sexual health; Ireland; discourse analysis.

Achieving sexual and reproductive justice in 'Western liberal' settings routinely involves issues of 'choice' for those involved (Freedman & Isaacs, 1993). For sexual health and critical psychologists, of interest is to examine how people orient to the role of 'choice' in rights' deliberations (Grice & Braun, 2017; Leask, 2015). Here we examine such orientation to matters of 'choice' in a setting where women's 'right to choose' abortion is central to sexual and reproductive rights advocacy: the ongoing 'Repeal the Eighth' movement in Ireland (RepealEighth, 2017).

While health psychologists offer a range of explanations for engagement with abortion rights, inclusive of intrapersonal psychological (Deak & Saroglou, 2015), others locate these in societal aspects (Macleod, Sigcau, & Luwaca, 2011). This latter line of inquiry allows for an examination of commonly shared resources that people employ in understanding and avowing support for or opposition to abortion rights (Grice & Braun, 2017). For instance, Katz and Tirone (2015), note that particular ideological formulations, such as 'neo-liberalism' are involved in both proposals for and arguments against abortion.

For health psychologists, of interest is how it is that such resources are used in negotiating abortion rights and practices. Researchers show that 'culture' is one such resource. Macleod, Sigcau, and Luwaca (2011) show that opposition to abortion can involve peoples' own understandings of culture. In their study, South African participants routinely treated culture as a resource in framing various abortion-related issues, such as that abortion violates cultural norms. In a study on how Māori women experienced abortion, Grice and Braun (2017) show that women oriented to abortion as implicating their abilities to choose, which however was involved with the consequences of colonialism. In other settings, research shows that women's decision making abilities are constrained by family members or the State (Gürsoy, 1996).

'Choice' in Sexual and Reproductive Rights

Scholars and activists, are then particularly concerned with the relevance of 'choice' for rights advocacy (McCulloch & Weatherell, 2017). Here, 'choice' for women is treated as implicating agency and autonomy, and therefore that women can and are actively shaping their own lives (Hughes, 2002). For instance, Oaks (2003) shows that much of Catholic Press reportage in Ireland goes against more modern understandings of women, such as their abilities and wishes to exercise choice and agency. However, in other settings emphasis on

'choice' or 'right to choose' has problematic outcomes for women. For instance, women in India might avail access to abortion and other health care amenities, while being denied routine sexual and reproductive justice in their households (Ravindran & Balasubramanian, 2004). In treating women as central agents in what is happening to them, the emphasis on 'choice' *can* limit examination of other forms of coercion for women.

Health psychologists then argue for examining how women themselves understand 'choice' when they are involved in abortion procedures. Kirkman and colleagues (2011) examine accounts of Australian women who had to consider abortion. They show that these women oriented to abortion as a difficult solution for complex problems. For these women aborting the pregnancy or going ahead with it was a responsible decision that had to be carefully made. Similarly, Leask (2015) notes that talk on abortion is diverse and complex that goes beyond dichotomies of 'pro-choice' versus 'pro-life' arguments. In her study in New Zealand, female participants treated abortion as an exceptional choice that is legitimate only in certain circumstances. Leask argues that treating abortion choices in terms of whether these were 'worthy', given particular circumstances, affirms the immoral character of abortion and works to limit possibilities for exercising abortion rights. In other settings, women similarly orient to their choices as constrained by prevailing social structures (cf. Shellenberg et al., 2011).

The above findings indicate that the relevance of 'choice' in matters of abortion differs for those who are involved in abortion practices and those who advocate for abortion rights. However, researchers / scholar-activists (McCulloch & Weatherall, 2017), argue that the emphasis on 'choice' as a pragmatic liberal feminist position still remains a robust means of advancing sexual and reproductive rights. It is then of interest to examine how proposals for abortion rights as centrally involving realization of women's 'choices' are offered, challenged, and negotiated, in settings without these rights. In this paper, we offer such an

examination in the case for contemporary movement for abortion rights in Ireland: 'Repeal the Eighth'.

The Irish setting

The current movement in Ireland for repealing the Eighth Amendment to her Constitution or the Article 40.3.3 has made women's rights to choose as the central argument (RepealEighth, 2017). Abortion has been illegal in Ireland since before its formation and this amendment to the Irish Constitution in 1983 was a result of a nation-wide referendum in the face of a legal case on importing contraceptives from outside Ireland. The amendment guaranteed the 'right to life of the unborn'ⁱ and is understood as equating this with the 'mother's right to life' (Journal.ie, 2014).

Martin (2000) argues that much of state legislation in Ireland was bound-up with Catholicism since its formation. This is particularly the case for women's reproductive rights, which are widely identified as associated with the Catholic heritage of Ireland (Dillon, 1996). For instance, the referendum for the amendment in 1983 was initiated by self-avowed 'pro-life' campaigners and the 67% support for this was treated as support for Catholicism (Randall, 1986). Debates and discussions on abortion in Ireland have taken place since the 1980s in institutions such as the Dáil Éireannⁱⁱ and other public spaces, and several of these routinely cite Catholic sources (Dillon, 1996) in supporting positions that ascribe living status to foetuses.

The relevance of Catholicism in abortion debates in Ireland has direct practical outcomes. For instance, that substantial numbers of Irish women travel abroad, particularly to the UK, for abortion services is treated as showing that the Irish state is avoiding providing safe and accessible reproductive health (Gilmartin & White, 2011). Berer (2013) argues that in many cases interpreting health care laws and policies, as in line with the supposed claims

of the Catholic church, lead to severe outcomes, such as that of the death of a pregnant woman Savita Halappanavar (Holland, 2012). In this way, debates and discussions on abortion in Ireland routinely take place in the broader context of the relevance of Catholicism.

However, alongside the role of such religious matters, Oaks (2002), notes the role of socio-economic contexts, such as Ireland's economic growth and changes in routine understandings of women and their rights (also see: Smyth, 2017). A particularly noteworthy aspect is that these debates involve squaring 'morality' (as broadly understood) with women's abilities to choose for themselves. It is this that provides the specific focus for the current study: we examine how it is that women's rights to choice in abortion practices are oriented to by members of the generic public in the setting of a concerted Abortion Rights Campaign. Repeated strikes and other actions garnered increased momentum behind this movement, which led to the appointment of a Citizens' Assemblyⁱⁱⁱ by the Irish Government on 15 July, 2016. On 22 April 2017 the members of the Citizens' Assembly voted to support liberal abortion reforms and recommend that the amendment be subject to legislation by the Dáil Éireann (McGreevy, 2017).

The present study

While the Citizens' Assembly was constituted to function as a representative of the wider electorate, it is useful to examine issues and concerns of the general public themselves. Their engagement with abortion issues in terms of how they mobilize and negotiate the relevance of issues such as 'choice' is of particular importance for health psychologists and abortion rights advocates. In this paper, we examine such phenomena through examining readers' comments to online news items of reportage and opinion-editorial pieces. Increasingly, scholars identify online engagement with news on public affairs as enacting 'digital democracy' (de Zúñiga,

Veenstra, Vraga, & Shah, 2010). By this, scholars mean that online engagement with news items and similar matters is in itself a form of political participation (de Zúñiga et al., 2010). This is particularly relevant for Ireland since it is one of the most 'digital news consuming' of English speaking countries (Keerrigan & MacCarvill, 2016). It is then worthy that researchers examine how it is that members of the general public, with access to the Internet, engage with the ongoing issues of repealing the Eighth amendment of the Irish constitution. While issues of 'choice' are central to abortion rights advocacy and perhaps opposition, the present study focuses on how treating 'choice' as central to realizing women's rights in abortion matters is proposed and opposed in the routine cut and thrust of public deliberation.

Method

We examined online posts made in response to news items on online news media websites of major Irish news agencies using discursive psychological approaches (cf. Seymour-Smith, 2015).

Data and participants

The posts were collected from three major Irish news agencies, The Irish Times, Independent.ie, and Journal.ie^{iv}, over a three-month period from 15 November 2016 to 15 February 2017, using a random-calendar generator to produce one-third of the days over this period. This period was particularly chosen to access posts on news items and op-ed articles that did not pertain to any particular event, such as a 'March for Repeal' that took place on 8 March 2017 or the outcomes of Citizen Assembly's deliberation. Rather the news items and the comments are 'routine' engagements with the movement to 'Repeal the Eighth Amendment'.

For the 30 days generated, researchers accessed the websites of each news agency in the evening time (between 5pm-8pm) on that date to allow for sufficient comments to have been posted and also not removed from these websites by default. While there were relevant news items on each of the dates, on some of the dates only one or two news websites had relevant articles. Relevant news items were selected through using search terms 'abortion', 'eighth amendment', and 'Citizens' Assembly'. Results from the search were screened for the date, relevance for Ireland (as opposed to other contexts), and topic. Given the extensive comments and the likelihood that similar comments will be repeated, we selected just the first 20^v comments and replies (inclusive of replies to any comment) to form the corpus to avoid saturation (Willig, 2001). The corpus was thoroughly read and re-read to familiarize ourselves with the data and the issues that posters attend to. For the purposes of this study instances where matters of rights and choice were discussed were selected for fine grained analysis.

The posters can create their own profile names that do not necessarily reflect their sex, gender, age, or nationality. Since these and similar other parameters are beyond the scope for this study, the focus was on the posts themselves. These posts are comments made by 'readers' / posters on the content of the news item or a post made by another poster. In this way posts form a *thread* of conversation. The news agencies selected, exemplify diverse social and political viewpoints, and offer diverse forms of coverage, which allows possibilities for readers to engage with a range of views on abortion and their subsequent posts / replies. In and through these posts, posters construct various versions of women, abortion, and choice in accomplishing support for or opposition to abortion laws. Discursive approaches to social phenomena are particularly concerned with how constructions of people, issues, and actions are used in accomplishing social action, such as supporting or opposing policies. These data then are particularly amenable to discursive analysis, as described below.

Analytic procedure

Discursive psychological approaches treat discourse as a topic of study in its own right (McKinlay & McVittie, 2008; Potter & Wiggins, 2007). Discursive researchers argue that peoples' use of language is to be examined for the actions accomplished in and through such use than as reflections of inner or external realities. This means that the analysis examined how particular versions of women, foetus, pregnancy, sexual and reproductive rights, and abortion were constructed in posts and the actions accomplished through such constructions in their occasioned use (Seymour-Smith, 2015). In particular, the focus was on how these constructions explicitly involved or made relevant 'choice' for stakeholders and the outcomes of this for rights advocacy.

Here of relevance is the analysis of membership categories such as 'women' and 'babies'. Analysts argue that the use of these categories treats people as belonging to 'which-type' sets (Sacks, 1992), where certain commonly known features associated with these categories becomes relevant. For the present purposes this means that the use of categories such as 'women', 'men', and 'baby' allow for inferences on possibilities of pregnancy or other activities normatively expected of them (Psathas, 1999). These normative expectations are uniquely suited to accomplishing social action as they warrant or remove the need for justifying particular action (Eglin & Hester, 1999; Stokoe, 2010). In their use, they set-up particular inferences on intention and choice: the occurrence of an expected action is readily attribute-able to category membership, whereas the occurrence of an action that is not routinely associated with a category is accountable. What this means for the present analysis is that particular / sets of categorisations used, attend to negotiating legitimacy of choosing abortion. Here it is worth noting that since the posts are public it is likely that these would attend to concerns over appearing irrational (Billig, 1988). The analysis then, also attended to

rhetorical aspects of these posts, such as managing certain implications while undermining others.

The present interactional environment *affords* (Hutchby, 2001) particular types of actions, such as ‘replying’ to another post or just leaving a ‘reply’ to the news item reported: the posts are then *occasioned* either in response to the news item being reported or other posts. The posts, then, accomplish actions of agreeing, disagreeing, challenging, or supporting the agents or positions in the news items or other posters. For the present study this means that posts made are examined for the constructions of issues of interest, their sequential location in the threads of conversation, and the actions being accomplished in so doing.

Results

Analysis of these posts shows that posters indeed treat ‘choice’ as relevant for abortion matters. In particular, posters orient to how ‘choice’ makes relevant issues of managing outcomes, alternative motives, and justifying particular actions.

In the first of the extracts, posters treat issues of ‘choice’ as relevant for both women and fetuses. The posts shown below are in response to an Independent.ie article dated February 05, 2017, titled: ‘She isn’t choosing from a menu’ – Citizens’ Assembly hears criticism of ‘abortion on demand’ term.

Extract 1

- 1 Kat And what would the baby choose? After all, his or her life is always at risk in this
2 matter. If my life was at risk, my doctor would automatically save my life but

3 would not directly target the life of my unborn child.

4 Cia @Kat foetuses dont have a choice.

5 Ref @Cia @Kat

6 Were you ever a foetus?

7 Abr @kat that is a ridiculous notion with no grounding in science or medicine and
8 used by anti-abortion lobbies as some sort of "salve". If for example you have
9 cancer which requires chemotherapy, by giving you the chemotherapy the medics
10 know that they are likely going to cause an abortion or serious damage to the
11 fetus, if they go ahead and do it anyway, then both patient and doctor are
12 knowingly causing damage to the fetus. I would prefer things honest and out in
13 the open. Any woman who has a life threatening condition should be able to have
14 an abortion, end of story. Her choice of course. And saying that your doctor
15 would automatically save your life? Are you sure? Savita's doctors did not save
16 hers. She was in sepsis as a direct result of the pregnancy and they still did not
17 abort. The woman is dead. Dead.

Kat's post introduces possibilities of choice as relevant for discussion here: 'what would the baby choose' (line 1). This is legitimized by the extreme-case formulated claim (Pomerantz, 1986) that 'his or her life is always at risk in this matter' (lines 1-2). Kat treats it as relevant that since foetuses cannot themselves choose, alternative aspects are relevant, which are demonstrated through references to a hypothetical situation, at lines 2-3. The first-person narration – 'If my life was at risk' – attributes to 'my doctor' two category-bound activities (Sacks, 1992): (1) of saving 'my life' and therefore acting in ways that do not involve choosing ('automatically' (line 2)), and (2) not directly harming the foetus: 'life of my unborn child'. These descriptions offer the inference that actors, other than women, involved

in pregnancy practices do not aim to terminate foetuses. Thus, Kat's post includes other actors as relevant in abortion choices: 'foetuses'.

Both Cia and Ref respond to this by managing inferences that foetuses/babies can choose, at lines 4 and 5-6 respectively. Cia negates the possibility that 'foetuses' can choose and therefore that considerations on foetuses' choices are irrelevant for the current rights' claims. Ref, challenges this through making relevant that this is the problem at hand: that while foetuses cannot choose they possibly grow into full humans, such as Cia, who can choose.

Abr's post, however, attends to the claim that harm to foetuses is a relevant consideration for women's rights to choose, and rejects such claim. The post offers the inference that in certain medical conditions, risk to the foetus is legitimate through a hypothetical example of a pregnant woman suffering from 'cancer' (line 9) and the consequences of 'chemotherapy' treatment: 'an abortion or serious damage to the fetus' (lines 10-11). The unproblematic status of such outcomes is given through the categories 'doctor' and 'patient', treated as institutional, and ascribing awareness to them of the outcomes: 'knowingly' (line 12). In so doing, Abr treats such outcomes as unrelated to concerns of choice and therefore judgements.

Subsequent to this, Abr turns to particular instances (Billig, 1988) that attend to the above categorisations. First, Abr offers a first-person avowal of preferences: 'I would prefer things honest and out in the open' (lines 12-13). Abr legitimizes such preference through the extreme-case formulated (Pomerantz, 1986) extrapolation to women: 'Any woman who has a life threatening condition should be able to have an abortion, end of story. Her choice of course' (lines 13-14). The use of idiomatic expression (Drew & Holt, 1988) (end of story) works to treat Abr's claim that women should be able to choose as in some ways final or beyond argument. Of interest is that Abr locates these claims in medical settings where issues

of personal well-being are centrally relevant. In so doing, she mitigates issues of responsibility for women that arise from choosing on behalf of foetuses, as claimed by Kat.

Second, Abr attends to the role of doctors in complex medical situations. Abr contradicts Kat’s claim that doctors would primarily save the pregnant woman’s life and not that of the foetus, through particular references to a widely known incident in Ireland that resulted in the death of a pregnant woman ‘Savita’ (line 15). Abr treats it as factual (cf. Potter, 1996) that ‘doctors did not save’ (line 15) Savita’s life by not administering abortion and that this resulted in her death. In this way, Abr legitimizes the call for women to be able to choose for themselves, without being held responsible for choosing on behalf of foetuses.

In the following extract such exercises of choice are constructed as directly undermining foetal well-being. The posts below were a response to a TheJournal.ie article dated November 17, 2016 titled: ‘It should be available in a safe way’: Scotland could help Northern Irish women obtain abortions’.

Extract 2

1 Mic It’s good to see that solidarity.

2 Hug They stand shoulder to shoulder in their fight against the rights of the unborn

3 Hug Noble Nicola^{vi} and her Army of Abortion Admirers.

4 Mic @Hug: who are these unborn we hear of?

5 I only know of foetuses.

6 Hug @Mic: I just don’t get the pro-abortion concept. It seems too perfectly clinical,
7 and as cold. To argue for the right to end any future person’s life for reasons
8 which, by definition, can include “selfish reasons”, seems to be grossly
9 unreasonable.

10 For women in dire medical need, or for those where the life of their unborn will
 11 be short and in enduring pain, or for those for whom consent was an issue; these
 12 women should be given the dignity for themselves and for their unborn child, to
 13 decide whether to end the pregnancy or not. But to believe that to extend this
 14 right to cover all cases up to, and including, whether the baby is wanted or not,
 15 and similarly to believe that this is not just a right to defecate all over a future
 16 person's life, is both hypocrisy and self-delusion on a grand scale.

In response to Mic's favourable evaluation of the reported news (line 1), Hug criticizes the events reported through the accusation that these events portend problems for 'rights of the unborn' (lines 2). In using the categorisation 'unborn' Hug allows for inferences on human-attributes, such as rights. Hug's post treats exercising abortion rights as directed at violating the rights of the 'unborn'^{vii}, than as related to medical reasons or choices for women. Mic, at lines 4-5, explicitly attends to such categorisation and negates this through using an alternative categorisation 'foetuses', which mitigates rights' ascription.

Hug in response, orients to Mic's post as suppressing rights of foetuses and promoting choice for women. Hug negates proposals for the latter, through categorising women in ways that present their actions as intimately bound-up with 'their unborn child' (line 12). The response is given in a three-part show concession format (Antaki & Wetherell, 1999) to bolster the case that rights to choose are problematic.

The initial part, at lines 7-9, *proposes* that current claims for women's rights to abortion are problematic. Hug does not take-up the challenge of re-categorization offered by Mic. Rather, Hug treats issues of choice for women as implicating rights and rights' advocacy and undermines these claims through particular characterization of these. First, Hug constructs rights' claims as promoting abortion – 'pro-abortion concept' – and not that these

claims are concerned with choices for women. Second, Hug constructs rights to choose abortion as potentially involving 'the right to end any future person's life' (line 7). Here the categorization 'any future person' is introduced in ways to treat these as persons in their own right and therefore that their rights are relevant considerations outwith their relatedness with pregnant women / mothers. Third, Hug undermines the relevance of choice in referring to potentially "selfish reasons" (line 8), since such choice does not consider the concerns of foetuses who are directly related to mothers. In sum, Hug treats current abortion rights' claims as relevant for the category 'women' and not the other category, 'future persons', and therefore illegitimate: 'grossly unreasonable' (lines 9-10).

The middle part, at lines 10-13, *concedes* that there are situations where abortion choices for women are legitimate, in a three-part listing format (Jefferson, 1990), which make relevant that these situations do not prioritize women and their choices but are mediated by other circumstances. The items in the list comprise particular circumstances for 'women' and foetuses in ways that treat outcomes for 'women' as implicating particular outcomes on foetuses. In particular, the items make relevant womanhood in terms of pregnancy and associated issues such as those of 'dire medical need' (line 10), 'enduring pain' (line 11) for 'their unborn' (line 10), and where 'consent was an issue' (line 12). The listing constructs possibilities for considering abortion as those where 'women' and 'unborn child' are bound-up not only as generic mothers and foetuses / possible babies, but as *their* mothers and foetuses / possible babies. This categorisation treats certain routine normative responsibilities that mothers owe their offspring as directly relevant in this particular case. Hug's concession then involves treating women as bound-up with and responsible for their foetuses than as those who can exercise choice as women.

In the final *reassertion* part, Hug offers an overarching account on exercising choice, treated as a contrast – 'But to believe' (line 13) – with the above concessions: 'right to cover

all cases' (line 14). The extreme case formulated (Pomerantz, 1986) description treats claims on abortion rights as outwith rationale – 'whether the baby is wanted or not' (line 14) – and rather that choice in matters of abortion is contingent. In particular, Hug treats it that rights to abortion as routine imply 'a right to defecate all over a future person's life' (lines 15-16). Here again, Hug treats the categories 'women' and 'future persons' as unrelated in offering the claim that a focus merely on the former involves denying the rights of the latter. In this way, Hug alternates between categorising women and fetuses as related and not in undermining the relevance of choice for women in abortion rights' claims.

In the following extract, posters treat such connectedness of women with fetuses as central in negotiating women's rights to choice in abortion practices. The posts below are in response to an Independent.ie article dated January 8, 2017, titled: 'WATCH: RTE broadcaster handles on-air interruption by anti-abortion protester in the best way possible'.

Extract 3

- 1 D You have been conned by language. Nobody should ever have the right to choose
2 to kill. And there is never a circumstance where it is best to kill the baby.
3 Pregnancy is not an illness. It is life
- 4 C @D So you would let pregnant women die – and with them, their unborn fetuses –
5 before you would allow abortion?!
- 6 Is this religious fanaticism or just a total lack of concern for the lives of pregnant
7 women?
- 8 E @D Have you ever heard of pre-eclampsia? Obviously not. You should read a bit
9 more.
- 10 F @E @D As per the Eighth Amendment, in a situation whereby the mother's life is
11 threatened, then everything is done to save her life, even if this were to cause the

12 unintentional death of her unborn child. Pro life wholly accepts this as an
 13 unintended consequence of saving the mother's life. This differs from abortion, the
 14 sole purpose of which is the intentional death of the unborn child in an otherwise
 15 healthy mother.

D's post rejects possible proposals for abortion through, in the first instance, characterizing abortion as 'the right to choose to kill' (lines 1-2) and 'kill[ing] the baby' (line 2). The rejection is offered through extreme case formulated (Pomerantz, 1986) declaration: 'Nobody should ever' (line 1). The reasons offered for this involve countering (Billig, 1987), what are treated as particular versions of pregnancy, namely that this is an 'illness' (line 3), with alternative versions, such as that it 'is life' (line 3). Posters, C, E, and F respond to this.

C's challenge treats abortion issues to involve both 'pregnant women' (line 4) and 'unborn fetuses' (line 4) as physically related to each other: 'with them, their' (line 4). This allows C to offer the inference that outcomes such as death, when happen for the mother lead to a similar outcome on the foetus. C thus undermines D's claims that reify 'the baby' (line 2) as a distinct central actor. C then offers candidate motives for such reification, which are designed to further undermine D's claims: 'religious fanaticism' and 'total lack of concern for the lives of pregnant women' (lines 6-7). Both of these are problematic for people might not want to come across as acting on these motivations (Billig, 1988). The first is problematic for the implication that proposals that deny abortion rights are motivated by 'fanaticism' and therefore irrational (Billig, 1988) and the second for implying that concerns of 'pregnant women', who are central stakeholders in pregnancy and abortion, are irrelevant. C's account then counters treating pregnant women and 'the baby' as distinct actors with alternative possibilities for choosing.

E's challenge to D's proposals makes relevant possible clinical issues, such as 'pre-eclampsia' (line 8). While the relevance of this is not explicated further, it works as an example of an instance where abortion might be required. E's post similarly nominates other instances where abortion of the foetus is not merely chosen. Rather that, outcomes for pregnant women and for foetuses are bound-up and therefore, abortion is legitimate outwith exercises of rights to choose.

F's post, similar to C's and, to an extent, E's post, treats 'the mother' (line 10) and 'her unborn child' (line 12) as directly bound-up with each other. This allows for including two instances, where the first endorses abortion and its outcomes, and the second rejects rights to abortion, interestingly, through making relevant 'choice'. The first, presented as in line with proposals in 'the Eighth Amendment' (line 10), involves unmentioned life-threatening issues for 'the mother' and routine actions taken-up to alleviate this: 'everything is done to save her life' (line 11). The extreme case formulated (Pomerantz, 1986) description of medical efforts suggests that it is routine to prioritize saving 'the mother's' life, including instances where this might lead to the death of the foetus. This allows F to claim that in these circumstances, foetal death is unavoidable – 'unintentional' (line 12) – and therefore that issues of choice are not relevant. In framing this as endorsed by the current 'Eighth Amendment' and a 'Pro life' (line 12) position, F treats extant provisions as sufficiently addressing issues. It is notable that this account closely follows that of the Eighth Amendment (Berer, 2013).

F's description of the second instance, 'abortion' (line 13), contrasts with the first in making relevant 'choice': 'intentional death of the unborn child in an otherwise healthy mother' (lines 14-15). F treats current proposals for rights to abortion as illegitimate through descriptions that treat these choices as centrally aimed at 'the unborn child' (line 14) – 'sole purpose' (lines 13-14) – and that these are unrelated to medical situations through the

descriptor 'healthy mother' (line 15). Here again, F treats the 'unborn child' and 'the healthy mother' as directly bound-up with each other through the preposition 'in' (line 14). This makes relevant that acts of choice by 'the mother' have a direct impact on 'the unborn child' and therefore that abortion rights cannot be the prerogative of women. In this way, F undermines abortion rights' claims that abortion should be a choice for women.

In the last of the extracts analysed here, posters attend to women's rights to choice as legitimate in its own terms. The posts shown below are in response to an Independent.ie article dated November 22, 2016, titled 'Don't use 'foetus' when you mean 'baby': Varadkar'. Leo Varadkar was then the Social Protection Minister in the Irish Government. Responses to this article start with 'Pau' treating technical matters of foetal health as relevant in ways to ascribe alternative levels of 'personhood', which are then taken-up for discussion. Below, however we see interactions where issues of 'choice' for women are treated as relevant.

Extract 4

- 1 Pau @kma At the end of the day, Leo will never be pregnant and it as much his
2 business as me judging whether he should get married. Only he understands the
3 complexity and only women understand the complexity of having children.
4 That is not to say men don't have rights in this, I believe in mediation between
5 fetus parents but other than them it's no one else's business unless they can help
6 in a solution.
7 Standing at the side, condemning abortion then whinging about single mother's
8 seems to be Irish way.
9 Fea @pau @kma "only women understand the complexity of having children."
10 Well judging by how many woman are pro abortion and listening to their

11 thoughts, I can tell you very few seem to understand the complexity of life in
 12 general and are certainly not qualified to decide whether a human life should be
 13 ended just because it is in THEIR body. The narcissistic tone of this debate is
 14 deeply worrying.

In this 'thread' Pau's posts attended to various aspects of the news reported and particularly to Leo Varadkar's statements. What we see above is the end of this series of posts. Pau's post starts with the idiomatic '[A]t the end of the day' (line 1) indicating not only that this is a conclusion to her arguments but also that the forthcoming is in some way final (Drew & Holt, 1988). The finality of these is rendered through drawing parallels between Varadkar and 'women'. First, Pau makes relevant Varadkar's sex and the associated inference that he can 'never be pregnant'. Second, Pau makes relevant Varadkar's 'marriage', which arguably makes relevant his self-declared homosexuality and unmarried status. Through these, Pau treats it that Pau cannot decide matters for Varadkar and similarly that Varadkar cannot decide matters for others, such as 'women'. Pau uses the category 'women' in ways that allow for *possibilities* for being pregnant and manages the inference that 'women' and 'foetuses' are already bound-up with each other. This is given in the upshot that 'only women understand the complexity of having children' (line 3).

Pau's subsequent account on legitimate stakeholders in pregnancy similarly does not involve foetuses or 'the unborn child'. Rather Pau treats 'men' (line 4), acting as 'fetus parents' [sic] (line 5), and unspecified others, willing to 'help in a solution' (lines 5-6), as legitimately involved: 'other than them it's no one else's business' (line 5). Pau contrasts this with the 'Irish way' (line 8), which presents unspecified others as involved in abortion matters: '[S]tanding at the side, condemning abortion then whinging about single mother's' [sic] (line 7). On the one hand, this account, mitigates inferences (Mick Billig, 1987) that

pregnancy and child rearing are sole matters for women: 'This is not to say'. On the other hand, these descriptions also offer inferences on the role of these legitimate stakeholders, which is either to partake in childrearing practices (parent) or offer unspecified help. Together then, Pau works-up the case for abortion rights to women in Ireland, which do not involve attending to 'concerns' of fetuses or 'the unborn child'. Rather that, abortion is a choice for women.

Fea negates the claim that women have a prerogative in choosing their pregnancy and its termination. First, through disparaging descriptions, Fea infantilizes women (cf. Orbach, 1993): 'very few seem to understand the complexity of life in general' (lines 11-12). Fea locates this claim in awareness of 'thoughts' (line 11) of 'woman who are pro abortion' [sic] (line 10). While this attends to implications of sexual prejudice, it also works to undermine support for 'abortion'. Fea treats this disparaging version of women as reasons for undermining their abilities to make choices on abortion: 'human life should be ended just because it is in THEIR body' (lines 12-13). Similar to extracts seen above, Fea uses the categories 'women' and 'fetuses' in ways that make relevant their direct connectedness. This allows for the inference that choices for women on pregnancy centrally involve other agents: 'human life'. Fea then offers the upshot that choosing abortion and rights' claims to do so are 'narcissistic'. In sum, Fea counters abortion rights' claims, offered here by Pau, that abortion is the prerogative of women, through categorising 'women' and 'fetuses' as directly bound-up with each other and therefore that women's choices are not theirs alone.

Discussion and conclusions

What the above analyses show is that posters negotiate legitimacy of women's rights to 'choice' in abortion practices. Posters orient to 'choice' and choosing as involving outcomes and motivations involved, in negotiating appropriate justifications for exercising choice.

These orientations to 'choice' in abortion practices, involved treating women either as independent agents or as those who are bound-up with pregnancy / motherhood. Posters, however, flexibly made relevant and engaged with these in proposing or opposing women's rights to abortion in contemporary Ireland.

Posters attended to matters of 'choice' as relevant for a range of topics on abortion, as seen in the news items. First, this involved treating outcomes of women's choice as relevant for considerations on abortion, such as those on the well-being of foetuses or pregnant women. For instance, in Extract 1, Kat makes relevant that since foetuses cannot choose outcomes for their well-being, these outcomes are relevant yet unconsidered in matters of abortion. Alternatively, in Extracts 2 and 3 posters make relevant that choice for women in matters of abortion is directly implicated in outcomes on their own well-being. Second, posters treated women's choice as implicating particular motivations for various stakeholders involved. Alternative ascriptions of 'choice' to women in matters of abortion were treated as implicating alternative motivations. In Extract 4, Pau treats motivations behind exercising abortion choices as irrelevant for those not related to pregnant women. Here, in response to Pau's claims, Fea treats such proposals for abortion rights as motivated by self-interest for abortion rights and therefore illegitimate. These aspects were then relevant for negotiating legitimacy of exercising choice. Together then, these ways of orienting to 'choice' for women were involved in negotiating the legitimacy of 'choice' as a right.

The present findings attend to previous research in two ways. First, research shows that for those involved in abortion practices, choosing or making such decisions was a complex task. Thus, Kirkman et al (2011) show that for Australian women undertaking abortion was a difficult issue. Leask (2015) notes that for women who are deliberating taking abortion, this was routinely treated as an exceptional choice, that is legitimate only in certain circumstances. In the present case, however, posters treated possibilities and acts of choosing

themselves as in need of legitimation. Such legitimacy was negotiated through attending to outcomes and motivations involved in choosing.

Second, previous findings show that negotiating issues of choice for women in abortion practices involves understandings and orientations to prevailing socio-cultural contexts. Thus, Grice and Braun (2017) show that for Māori women, choosing abortion was understood as related to indigenous understandings of outcomes on 'eternal life'. In Turkey, Gürsoy (1996) shows how for women, taking decisions on abortion involved family members and the State. Here, however, posters routinely offered two versions of women: as independent agents or as those who are intimately connected to pregnancy / motherhood. The latter version involved ascribing personhood to fetuses or treating pregnancy / motherhood as a unique prerogative for women, which allowed for inferences on responsibilities of mothers (cf. Eglin & Hester, 1999) or on biological outcomes. Such flexible inferences were used in negotiating legitimacy of 'choice' in abortion practices. While the Eighth Amendment to the Irish Constitution ascribes personhood to fetuses and cites this as reasons for denying abortion (also see: Morgan, 2009), posters could flexibly draw upon such resource in negotiating legitimacy of 'choice' in abortion practices. While posters attended to the broader contextual aspects of the Eighth Amendment and perhaps Catholicism, they could offer various versions of these flexibly in negotiating rights to choose.

The present findings then show that people negotiate the legitimacy of 'choice' as relevant to abortion rights in contemporary Ireland. This also involved rejecting claims that denied choice for women or its relevance, as seen in Extract 3. However, such proposals were rejected in favour of curtailed possibilities of choosing. While rights activists and scholars, employ and treat 'choice' as central to realisation of women's rights (McCulloch & Weatherall, 2017), for members of the general public, these are understood not merely as

abilities to choose outwith societal or structural restraints. Rather, posters treat these as implicating particular practical and psychological aspects.

The present data and analyses, however, do not attend to critiques against individualism inherent in 'choice' and perhaps limit opportunities for such critique. Moreover, the data are unique in being online comments to news items. Despite such reservations, or because of this, the arguments and positions advanced here can have implications for how access to abortion is understood. The findings thus carry implications for sexual health psychology more broadly: advocacy or promoting practices of safe(r) sex (Coleman, 2002), for instance, can then look beyond an emphasis on choosing particular practices. Rather, an engagement with how it is that choosing, or not, such practices is embedded in particular social (or discursive) practices is perhaps fruitful. As the present case shows, issues of 'choice' have a social life: people attend to outcomes, motives, and appropriate justifications of choosing particular practices. Similarly promoting sexual and reproductive care and rights can usefully attend to how it is that certain practices are already justified and others, perhaps novel, need justification. Sexual health psychologists can then fruitfully focus on peoples' own orientations to matters of sexual health rights.

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ⁱ While these issues are also relevant, the current study will focus on issues of 'choice'.

ⁱⁱ Irish Legislative body.

ⁱⁱⁱ Citizens' Assembly is a body with a chairperson and 99 citizens randomly chosen to deliberate some of the most important issues facing Ireland's future (Citizens' Assembly, 2016).

^{iv} These news agency websites are the most popular nation-wide in Ireland and encompass a mixture of broadsheet and tabloid newspapers. These news agencies also endorse diverse politics. The Irish Times is generally perceived as politically progressive and liberal, The Irish Independent as populist conservative, and the Irish Examiner as centrist conservative and Irish nationalist.

^v While there is no *a priori* statistical justification for this number of comments, we chose this number so as to allow for sufficient engagement with the news item and to prevent saturation. On days that posters engaged with news items, the number of posts (exclusive of replies) routinely went beyond 20.

^{vi} Nicola Sturgeon is the current First Minister of Scotland.

^{vii} These and other aspects of categorization and category use of 'foetus' vs. 'unborn' are being developed elsewhere because these deserve a lengthier treatment.