



March for choice, Dublin, September 2017

Taking on the sexist system:

## Repeal and the fight for real change

Marnie Holborow

Not so long ago media pundits were fond of saying that women across the western world had it all, that we were living in a post-feminist world. Then Trump, an open sexist and woman molester, arrived in the White House. Then Hollywood king, Harvey Weinstein was shown up as a rapist and sexual assaulter who had got away with intimidating his victims and journalists over decades. 2017 laid bare what women had long suspected: violent sexism was the norm and very little had changed.

In Ireland, too, sexual harassment has been going on in elite circles for decades. The extent of Michael Colgan's power-mad sexism at the Gate Theatre included the screaming of obscene threats to women that if they didn't give in to him, he would make their life hell.

Violent sexism was uncovered in other high places. 'Inappropriate' sexual behaviour toppled a British Tory

minister. In the 'men-only' President's Club in London, young women working were forced to sign non-disclosure agreements to allow corporate executives to paw and grope them with impunity. The ruling classes do gross sexism shamelessly, and have the means and power to keep it hidden.

### From #MeToo to women's strikes

All this was brought to light because women in their numbers broke the silence. The #MeToo campaign with literally millions of women speaking out about their experience of sexual harassment showed the shocking normalization of a violent, sexist culture. At this year's Golden Globe awards the celebrities wore black in solidarity with survivors of sexual abuse and assault; and invited was Tarana Burke, a longtime black activist who first coined the phrase "Me Too". The outing of sexu-

al harassment has given confidence to women everywhere. It has put other issues back on the agenda, like the glaring gender pay gap at the BBC and RTE and in other jobs.

#MeToo is part of a rising international movement of women standing up against sexism. The women's marches in the US, in January, drew hundreds of thousands of people onto the streets across many cities. Alongside the slogans against sexual violence and for reproductive rights, were demands for immigrant and LGBTQ rights, for a free Palestine. In the UK, between over 80,000 people joined the Women's March in London. Marches took place in Berlin, Paris, Rome, Vienna, Geneva and Amsterdam. In Poland thousands took to the streets in freezing temperatures to support the Polish Women's Strike against restricting the right to abortion. In Italy, the #MeToo movement—#quellavoltache (that time that)—has drawn thousands to Women's Marches in Rome, Milan and Florence and it also attacked Berlusconi and the racism of the Lega Nord and Forza Nuova.

On International Women's Day in Spain this year, vast numbers protested on the streets in support of a strike for women's rights. Called by ten unions to demand equal pay, the 24-hour strike saw hundreds of trains canceled and women TV announcers joining the protests. 5.3 million people observed the two-hour stoppage that Spain's two main unions, the CCOO and UGT, were pressured into calling. Mainstream parties were running to catch up. The liberal-rightist party Ciudadanos declared that it too was in favour of women's rights, hastening to add that 'being feminist doesn't mean being anti-capitalist'.

### **Women's oppression the norm**

The growing campaign for Repeal in Ireland is part of this new resurgent movement for women's rights. Ireland has an exceptionally conservative legacy on issues affecting women, a legacy which the mainstream parties never challenged. It suited the Irish establishment, following its close shave with revolution in the 1920's, to allow the Catholic Church to take the lead on imposing ultra conservative views on sex and sexuality. This pact explained in 1983 how Garret Fitzgerald – supposedly a liberal – could so quickly cave in to 'the masterminds of the right' and allow a referendum to insert the 8<sup>th</sup>

Amendment to go ahead.<sup>1</sup> Subsequent Irish governments were only too happy to leave the amendment in place, plead a special Catholic case for Ireland in Europe, and hold back the tide of liberalisation.

Despite this, it should be remembered that Ireland is at the bad end of a regime of women's oppression that exists right across capitalism. Globally, women earn 23% less than men: across the EU, it is 16.2%. One recent report has found that no country was left untouched by sexism and discrimination when it came to women in the workplace.<sup>2</sup> For women everywhere, pregnancy and child-rearing leads to low pay and being unavailable to work. 26% of Irish women aged 15 or over have experience sexual, physical or psychological violence, slightly more than the rate in Spain.<sup>3</sup> In India for example rising growth rates and urbanisation has not altered the fact that 37% of women suffer from some sort of domestic violence.<sup>4</sup>

Women's reproductive rights, not fully won anywhere, remain restricted by the costs involved, increased privatization of healthcare, imposed waiting periods for abortion. They are under constant attack from the Right. In US, for example, after *Roe vs. Wade* and the long battles, you could have believed that women's rights had achieved some sort of settled status. Not so. In recent years the automatic right to free birth has been taken away from some 55 million women in the US and 30 anti-abortion laws have been passed in 14 states.<sup>5</sup> Similar rolling back on access to legal abortion has taken place under a right wing government in Poland, with victims of rape not being able to get abortions and the number of back-street abortions on the increase.

Sexist and discriminatory attitudes and norms have always persisted but in recent times they have in many ways become more glaring. The utter physical degradation of women, aided amply by the booming multi-million dollar sex and porn industry, has intensified. Commodification of women's bodies has become completely normalised. In the recent Belfast rape trial, it would appear, given the lack of objections to the defence's line of questioning at the trial, demeaning women is normal for the judiciary too.

Materially, socially and economically things have gone downhill for women. A recent US study finds millennial women are worse off than those of the Baby Boomer generation, in terms of economic equality, health,

and overall wellbeing. Poverty rates among women, especially amongst those without college degrees, are rising. Women still need an extra college degree to earn the same as men. Female incarceration, maternal mortality and female suicide rates are up.<sup>6</sup>

If this teaches us anything it is that reforms are never permanent. In today's world, there is no long march to greater gender equality. Deeper economic crises and political backlashes can rip away hard-fought gains. What's more, capitalism itself perpetuates women's oppression in the very way that it is structured.

### **The family and social reproduction**

One of the distinctive features of the Marxist analysis is that it locates women's oppression and sexism, not just as societal excesses, but as rooted deeply within the capitalist system.

Marx argued that wage labour was the essence of the capitalist system. Workers sell their labour power to capitalists in return for a wage. Its constant supply must be maintained which means providing recuperation, sustenance and the reproduction of new workers for the future. One form of labour replacement in the past was slavery; another today is immigration. But the family, in all its contemporary forms, remains the main institution for the reproduction and replenishment of labour power.

Domestic care in the family unit dovetails with capitalist exploitation and is traceable in the wage form. It may seem as though the worker freely engages in work. But in capitalism, because workers are separated from the means of production, they have no choice but to work. The only way they can access money to buy what they need to live is to sell their ability to work on the labour market. This simple fact is an ever-present 'silent compulsion' behind the wage system, as Marx called it.<sup>7</sup>

What people are paid in capitalism is not a fair sum for a fair day's work but, because surplus value is extracted by the employer, an amount whose value is always less than the value of the work done. In fact, as Marx wrote 'the value of labour power is the value of the means of subsistence necessary for the maintenance of its owner'<sup>8</sup> (i.e. the worker). In other words, the wage is calculated around a base-line of what is considered necessary to meet the basic needs of workers – to feed, house, clothe themselves to be able to renew 'a work-

er's life process' as Marx called it.<sup>9</sup> And it is women who shoulder most of this work.

The wage that a worker gets is set not around the value created, but around a concept of 'a living wage' – enough for workers and their families to live and exist through the structure of individual family units. Of course, employers do not always get away with setting this as low as they would like. All the time workers fight to raise wages to raise their standard of living, and to reclaim from the employer what has been taken from them. Also, workers who have key pivotal roles in the economy can command higher wages. But the point to stress here is that domestic care for social reproduction is not a parallel system running alongside production but is intricately tied to capitalist production and profit accumulation. In other words, 'the human life cycle turns to the drum beat of capital'.<sup>10</sup>

This is of course an ideal arrangement for capital because it provides, cheaply and efficiently, the domestic care vital to the reproduction of labour power. It suits capitalist states, too. Governments may deem it necessary to provide some additional aspects of social reproduction, such as education, a health service and, to some extent, pensions (together called the 'social wage' by mainstream economists) to ensure they get the skilled, healthy and stable workforce they need. But even these depend on basic care being provided in the home.

### **Women worse off**

The role that women play as mothers and carers is therefore a vital one for the capitalist system. It also causes women to lose out. Because they take time off from work when they have children, because they must juggle work and childcare, many women end up in lower paid, dead-end jobs. In the cases of migrant women and women of colour, they end up doing domestic and child care work which has been outsourced to them by wealthier women.

Women earn less than men in capitalist societies everywhere. Ireland is no different. Women's pay is 14% less than men and, despite women overtaking men in possessing higher education degrees, the gap has widened by 2% since the recession.<sup>11</sup> A study done by NERI in 2016 found that 207,000 female employees were categorised as on low pay, about 60% of the total.<sup>12</sup> Half of women workers earn less than €20,000, which is well

below the median wage for all workers.<sup>13</sup> In 2015, a report on labour exploitation across the EU found that in Ireland domestic workers are most at risk of super-exploitation.<sup>14</sup> At the other end of the labour market, the higher their educational attainment and the more experience they have women find themselves being paid a lot less than their male counterparts; one Irish study, in 2016, finding that this gap was as much as 20%.<sup>15</sup> Motherhood and work are often incompatible as childcare in Ireland is exorbitantly expensive. 40 years after the marriage bar was lifted, many Irish women still must give up full time jobs when they have children. This also results in a large pension shortfall for women.<sup>16</sup>

The state is directly responsible for this gender inequality. The neoliberal privatisation of social services and state cutbacks in public spending has made the situation worse. Their effect has been to set back working class living standards permanently and women, because of their position as society's default caregivers, have suffered most.

For example, Joan Burton's infamous slashing of the One-Parent Family Payment affected thousands of lone parents – 84% of whom are women. They have the highest deprivation rate of any disadvantaged groups.<sup>17</sup> The largest section of the Irish population who are poor (25.7 %) are children.<sup>18</sup> Long-term unemployment, which occurred because of the crisis, is more common for women.<sup>19</sup> Shockingly, a higher proportion of homeless people in Ireland are women compared to other EU countries.<sup>20</sup>

Austerity attacks on the living conditions of the working class have triggered struggles outside workplaces, around 'the circuit of social reproduction', as Tithi Bhattacharya points out. She cites as an example Ireland's water charges movement, and the anti-privatisation movement in Cochabamba in Bolivia, the struggles against land evictions in India and others.<sup>21</sup> The fact that these struggles started in working class communities has also meant that women played a prominent role in the struggle. In the Irish water charges movement, its distance from the bureaucratic conservatism of trade union leaders, the spontaneous super-organisation of its activists, many of them women, gave the struggle its militant character. Its determination, its ability, in defiance of all-out state attacks through the courts, to repeat huge mobilisations, secured an outright victory for the

movement. People power delivered. Trotsky's observation about revolutions being started by women, 'the most oppressed and down trodden part of the working class', certainly seemed apt for those long columns of anti-water charges protestors as they lined both sides of the Liffey on the many national marches. It is true that not all the women on the anti-water marches have embraced as enthusiastically the cause for abortion rights. But the achievements of that movement have resonated with some fighting for Repeal. Organising from below, mobilising in the communities, being local activists seems logical to some of the Repeal groups and the lessons of the struggle have been passed on.

### **Irish women as workers**

The value of the Marxist social reproduction analysis is that it stresses the relationship between class exploitation and oppression. It shows how gender and class intertwine. Rejecting the idea of two parallel independent systems – patriarchy and capitalism – social reproduction analysis articulates a unitary Marxist theory which understands gender discrimination as a spin-off from the need of capitalism to ensure a constant supply of labour power. It also highlights how struggles outside the workplace arena can also reflect the needs and the imperatives of the working class at any one time.<sup>22</sup>

But it is also worth stressing how women are part of the workforce and how this affects their political consciousness. Women working has an impact on the family, on the relationships between men, women and children, and on women's social agency. This was a key insight of the socialist writings of Engels, of Zetkin and of Kollontai.

It is particularly relevant for Ireland because the numbers of women working has grown considerably. As the table on page 44 shows, Irish women have entered the workforce in large numbers in a relatively brief period.

The percentage Irish women as part of the total labour force is well ahead of Turkey and nearly on a par with the US. Like Brazil, Ireland the percentage of women which make up the workforce has grown considerably since 1990.

It is true that, as a proportion of the female population, the number of women working in Ireland is still lower than other countries – a fact due to the type of jobs lost during the recession, numbers of males emi-

### Labor force, female (% of total labor force), selected countries<sup>23</sup>

Female labor force as a percentage of the total show the extent to which women are active in the labour force.

| COUNTRY        | 1990      | 2017      |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|
| Australia      | 41        | 46        |
| Belgium        | 39        | 46        |
| Brazil         | 35        | 43        |
| China          | 45        | 44        |
| Canada         | 44        | 47        |
| Denmark        | 46        | 47        |
| France         | 42        | 47        |
| Germany        | 41        | 47        |
| Greece         | 36        | 44        |
| <b>Ireland</b> | <b>34</b> | <b>45</b> |
| Nigeria        | 42        | 45        |
| Poland         | 46        | 45        |
| Saudi Arabia   | 11        | 16        |
| Sweden         | 47        | 47        |
| Turkey         | 31        | 32        |
| United Kingdom | 43        | 47        |
| United States  | 44        | 46        |

grating and other factors.<sup>24</sup> It is also true that the lack of affordable childcare means that women with children are less likely to work than in other countries. For Irish women aged between 30 and 39, and without third level education, there has been a decline in participation rates as they are the cohort most affected by expensive childcare costs.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless there has been a substantial and cumulative change to female participation rates: in 1992 only 48 per cent of women aged 20 to 64 were in the labour force, in 2015 68 per cent of women of this age group were.<sup>26</sup>

More women in third level education, (they now outnumber men) has led to new areas of work for women. This has changed the look of what was traditionally known as white collar work.<sup>27</sup> In recent years, employment of people with third level qualifications has grown, with the share of workers with tertiary education growing from 27 per cent to 48 per cent between 1995 and 2015. Because women are more likely to have third level qualifications, the recession affected them less adversely and have suffered less unemployment and emigration than men.<sup>28</sup>

It is often said that the victory of the same sex marriage referendum in the south was down to a slick PR

campaign. However, issues of class and gender including women's participation in work and higher education may have had a stronger effect than is sometimes realised. In the campaign, the younger generation, men and women, were mobilised in large numbers and many graduates working abroad returned home to vote (68,000 people were added to the supplementary electoral register in advance of the referendum). Rapidly expanding number of students, particularly women, in colleges and universities - where sexual politics, for gay and trans rights, and against sexism have become the new politics in recent years - swelled the Yes vote. Polls before the referendum showed women were the most supportive of same sex marriage. There was also a strong vote in Dublin working class areas - Dublin South Central had the highest yes vote at 72.3% - where there are marginally fewer men than women.<sup>29</sup> USI, with a female student president at the time, played a very prominent role in energising the Yes vote.<sup>30</sup>

### Liberal limits

We are living in times which has seen a huge widening gap between rich and poor and which has deeply affected the politics of women's rights. Last year has seen the biggest ever global increase in billionaires, with two new Irish billionaires joining the list.<sup>31</sup> At the other end, an ever-larger proportion of the population is unable to meet even their basic needs, and 800,000 Irish people, including those in employment, experience deprivation.<sup>32</sup>

This obscene wealth gap has had political effects to the right and the left outside Ireland: the growth of Trump and the far right and fascists but also the popularity of radical politics amongst people increasingly impatient with the unmissable elite bias of traditional 'progressive' parties. Hilary Clinton's record on welfare, Wall Street, criminal justice, education saw her dubbed a rich 'faux feminist' who advanced policies which have done actual harm to the lives of poor women in the US and across the globe.<sup>33</sup> The radicalisation of the politics of gender and race has given socialist ideas in the US a new currency. The Democrats may still be trying to play catch-up (as evidenced by their 'March to the Polls' slogan this year on the women's marches) but for many, their fake liberalism cannot be easily papered over.

Liberalism in the mainstream is a newer phenom-

enon in Ireland and has not yet lost its shine, but the same contradictions lie beneath the surface. Varadkar wants to be the modern, trendy PR-savvy liberal. To the Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, he declares he is a feminist, to Emanuel Macron that they are both the clean sweep politicians who will save Europe from its crisis. But, as the old ruling centrist parties in Europe have found, neoliberal liberalism suffers from deep flaws.

Varadkar's approach to the abortion issue is a classic case in this respect. Aware of a certain radicalism gaining a foothold in Irish politics, he seeks to steer change along safer liberal lines. He thus goes along with the Oireachtas committee's recommendation for Repeal and the 12-week period for abortions, which decriminalises and provides the legal basis for abortion. This is of course a significant step forward in Ireland. But we should remember that what got us here were the thousands of pro-choice people on the streets, the campaigners for women's health care and rights across the country over many years, the women who have spoken out about their abortions. In comparison, Varadkar, only recently describing himself as pro-life, is a johnny-come-lately. His current calculation is that being pro-repeal will do well for FG among the young urban professionals and appeal to the pro-diversity IT corporate sector.

But Varadkar, Harris and company- like many liberals – speak of abstract rights separate from material questions. They have put a 'doctor-led' solution at the centre of their legislative proposals. Given that the GP is a paying system, and that eligibility for medical and GP visit cards have a weekly income threshold of €184 and €276 respectively, even low paid workers will not easily be able to afford the service. Not to mention that abortion pills can cost over €100.

Equally, it is not clear how abortions will be accommodated in the existing system. Will future surgical abortions be able to be squeezed into an already overlaid, under-resourced health service? Will all those who seek abortions be able to be fitted in within 12 weeks? For most women, rights without access does not make enough of a difference. People Before Profit TD Bríd Smith summed this up in the Dáil: 'The referendum is about the right of an individual to choose abortion. But it is also about the provision of services and education

that makes that choice open to everyone'.

Ignoring the reality of access brands one section of the Repeal movement as being disdainfully distant from the concerns of ordinary people. Fine Gael is against extra spending for public services and has arrogant reflexes such as appeals to people 'who get up early in the morning'. For many working-class voters, Fine Gael is politically toxic. This could easily backfire on the Yes campaign, as the Brexit referendum did for the Tories. It could result in a low vote or feed into support for the conjured-up populism of the other side.

### Mass campaign

How the Repeal movement expands between now and May 25<sup>th</sup> will determine the size of the Yes vote. If this is decisive, it will make further changes in Irish society winnable.

Some sections of the Together for YES campaign are very fond of appealing to the 'middle ground'. Of course, there are still many people who have not made up their minds yet about which way they will vote. Canvassing already done in some Dublin constituencies shows that, while overall showing a positive response to Repeal, some people are not clear on what it will mean, not sure what they feel about the 12 week proposal and so on. They are as yet undecided and the campaign certainly needs to reach out to them. But 'middle ground' implies something else: that they veer naturally to older traditional views. From this, it follows that the campaign must tightly promote 'soft messaging', with an emphasis on care and compassion, not choice. The PR consultant, for the Together for Yes campaign has gone as far as to say that findings from focus groups showed that mention of choice was 'a gift to the other side'.

This is wrong-headed. Focus groups are a market ritual which may give the impression that people are being consulted but are, in fact, notorious for directing respondents to giving the answer the moderator has already decided upon. They are usually rather condescending to ordinary people and certainly no substitute for real democracy.<sup>34</sup> A mass campaign does not need focus groups, nor need it be unduly worried about a tightly controlled messaging strategy. It has hundreds of activists that are only too aware why they are for Repeal and these activists are getting live feed-back on the doorsteps and on the streets. More importantly, the

campaign to Repeal the 8<sup>th</sup>, as all the recent demonstrations have shown, is absolutely about choice. Most of the activists in the movement see this fight as part of winning women's full bodily autonomy on the road to full gender equality. To pretend otherwise is phoney. On the doorstep, while there is sometimes hesitation around the 12-week proposal, most agree that the person who should have the final decision about abortion is not the judges, not the politicians, not the bishops, but the woman herself. Given the widespread experience of abortion in Ireland – every day 12 women and girls travel and at least 3 take abortion pills - this is not surprising.

If the Repeal campaign is to mobilise women and men in their thousands it must reach out wider across society and engage in the full range of the arguments for Repeal. It needs to give voice to those who want to see an end to the dark history of bishop control, to women who are parents now but who have had abortions in the past, to young women and men who believe that restricting women's reproductive choice is archaic and oppressive, to the women who are forced to keep silent on their experiences of abortion, to migrant women who cannot travel. It needs to strongly defend the 12 weeks provision as a bare minimum to decriminalise abortion. The strength of the Repeal movement is its diversity and women being at the centre of it. Narrowing it down into one bland soft message of compassion towards women, as some in the Yes campaign advocate, does not reflect the lived experience of the real women who have made the choice to have abortions.

It needs to speak directly to the 45% of the Irish workforce who are women. The Trade Union Campaign to Repeal the 8th has produced a very good report entitled *Abortion is a Workplace Issue*. Workplace meetings and Repeal groups should discuss the ways it suggests of concretely supporting working women who have abortions: through winning the right to time off, to claim sick pay, being able to go to the union representative for support.<sup>35</sup> The trade union dimension to the fight for abortion rights proved crucial for the UK and elsewhere in the 1970's; in Ireland today, support from the trade union movement and in workplaces is vital too.

As a recent study shows, abortion is a class issue. One of its respondents, a 40-year-old woman living in the Republic highlighted that while those with money could

not only readily access abortion, they did not have to reveal that they were seeking an abortion in order to access funds/resources. 'If you have money and means to travel without anybody taking note, then you can go to the UK and have an abortion and no one is any wiser – no embarrassment or public stigma. If you are in a low paid job or unemployed you could end up trapped in an unwanted pregnancy or have to turn to friends, family, money lenders for finance.'<sup>36</sup> With abortion, like so many other things, the experience of oppression is mediated by class. The campaign should make clear that no woman should have to travel.

With the Yes campaign, Ireland is at a crossroads and a lot is at stake. Does the Repeal movement channel the anger against Ireland's oppressive anti-woman legacy into drawing in the students, working class communities, people of all ages into the fight for real changes for women? Or do we settle for a limited nod to the reality of abortion but which leaves lots of women still unable to access it?

To win real rights for women, we need system change. Our government is cutting services to community, and will never provide free childcare and free healthcare to women. This leaves women taking care of those that are not working and yet are also expected to fill the new jobs that capitalism requires. On the massive Spanish women's strike on March 8<sup>th</sup>, many had no problem answering the right-wing government's attempt to tar them as radicals, by saying 'but of course we're anti-capitalist'. And they are right. We have a historic opportunity here to push back the forces of conservative reaction and, with the huge energy and activism of the Repeal campaign, to open the door to real social change for women.

#### Notes

1 Emily O'Reilly, *Masterminds of the Right*, Dublin 1997 Attic Press.

2 *United Nations Population Fund The State of World Population 2017*, available at <https://www.unfpa.org/swop>

3 The most recent EU figures quoted in the *Guardian*, 5 Mar 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2014/mar/05/violence-against->

women-european-union-physical-sexual-abuse

- 4 UN figures available at <http://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en/countries/asia/india#1>
- 5 [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/06/01/14-states-have-passed-laws-making-it-harder-to-get-an-abortion-already-this-year/?utm\\_term=.fadda3797b90](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/06/01/14-states-have-passed-laws-making-it-harder-to-get-an-abortion-already-this-year/?utm_term=.fadda3797b90)
- 6 'Millennial women struggling more than their mothers did', *Fortune* June 16, 2017, <http://fortune.com/2017/06/16/millennial-women-struggling-study/>
- 7 As above, p899.
- 8 As above p.270
- 9 As above, p296.
- 10 Sara Leonard, 'Sex Class in The Future: We want; radical Ideas for the New Century' in Sarah Leonard and Bhaskar Sunkara (eds) *The Future We Want*, Metropolitan Books: New York, 2015 p63. It has been argued by some socialist feminists that there are two systems – patriarchy and capitalism – each with their own history. Social Reproduction theorists, by contrast, explain gender and class as part of one system, capitalism, a Marxist theoretical premise that I also take here.
- 11 Fiona Gartland, 'Gender gap is widening in Ireland CSO figures show' *Irish Times*, Oct 19, 2017 <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/gender-pay-gap-is-widening-in-ireland-cso-figures-show-1.3260896>
- 12 Nevin Economic Research Institute, *Women and Low Pay: an empirical assessment* (NERI Quarterly Economic Observer), [https://www.neriinstitute.net/download/pdf/michel\\_collins\\_neri\\_paper.pdf](https://www.neriinstitute.net/download/pdf/michel_collins_neri_paper.pdf)
- 13 Rory Hearne and Cian McMahon, *Cherishing all Equally 2016: Economic Inequality in Ireland*, analysis of Ireland's economic inequality indicators, TASC: Dublin, 2016, p28. [https://www.tasc.ie/download/pdf/tasc\\_inequalityreport\\_2016\\_web.pdf](https://www.tasc.ie/download/pdf/tasc_inequalityreport_2016_web.pdf)
- 14 Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland, Press statement, 2/6/2015 Available at <https://www.mrci.ie/press-centre/in-ireland-workers-in-private-homes-are-most-at-risk-of-exploitation-new-eu-report/>
- 15 Joanna Langier, 'Irish Pay Gap stands at 20% according to Morgan McKinley', 17/11/2016, <https://www.morganmckinley.ie/article/irish-gender-pay-gap-stands-20-according-morgan-mckinley-study>
- 16 As above, p9.
- 17 *One Family Ireland*, October 22, 2017, <https://onefamily.ie/media-publications/facts-figures/>
- 18 Social Justice Ireland, *Socio-economic Review*, Dublin 2015 p45 <https://www.socialjustice.ie/sites/default/files/attach/policy-issue-article/3852/chapter3.pdf>
- 19 European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland, Policy Briefing 2018, EAPN Dublin, 2018, p8 <http://www.eapn.ie/eapn/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/poverty-briefing-2018.pdf>
- 20 As above p8
- 21 Tithi Bhattacharya 'How not to skip class: Social Reproduction of Labor and the Global Working Class' in *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class* 'Recentering Oppression', London: Pluto, 2017.
- 22 Tithi Bhattacharya (ed), *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping class, Recentring Oppression*, London: Pluto, 2017. Rejecting the idea of two parallel independent systems – patriarchy and capitalism – social reproduction theory articulates a unitary Marxist theory which understands gender discrimination as a spin-off from the need of capitalism to ensure a constant supply of labour power.

23 International Labour Organization, using World Bank population estimates. 2017 <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLFTOTL.FE.ZS?locations=SN>

24 The employment rate for women in Ireland as a percentage of the female population of working age rose to 60.6% in 2007, then fell over the recession to 55.2%. Most recent figures show that it stands at 59.5% In the UK the employment rate for women is higher at 68.8%. See Women and men in Ireland 2016, Central Statistics Office, Dublin, <http://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-wamii/womenandmeninireland2016/employment/>

25 Maxime Bercholz and John Fitzgerald, 'Recent Trends in Female Labour Force Participation in Ireland', ERSI, *Quarterly Economic Commentary* - Autumn 2016, p.71. Employers are also concerned about the untapped wealth of not being able to employ women who are mothers, see an IBEC report on the subject at [https://www.ibec.ie/IBEC/Press/PressPublicationsdoclib3.nsf/vPages/Newsroom~radical-reforms-needed-to-improve-female-participation-09-10-016/\\$file/Labour+Market+Participation+of+Women+Oct+2016.pdf](https://www.ibec.ie/IBEC/Press/PressPublicationsdoclib3.nsf/vPages/Newsroom~radical-reforms-needed-to-improve-female-participation-09-10-016/$file/Labour+Market+Participation+of+Women+Oct+2016.pdf)

26 As above, p63

27 Women represented 52.2% of all third-level graduates in Ireland in 2016. See Journal.ie 'More Irish women than men have third level qualifications', Oct 18, 2017 <http://www.thejournal.ie/cso-men-women-3652012-Oct2017/>. Bercholz and Fitzgerald found that the share of the female population with less than a Leaving Certificate more than halved from 1995 to 2015, while that of women holding a third-level qualification increased from 18 per cent to 41 per cent.

28 Bercholz and Fitzgerald, p61. They conclude that a further limited rise in the female participation rate is likely over the next five years.

29 Central Statistics Office Results 2016, p.25 <http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/newsevents/documents/census2016summaryresultspart1/Census2016SummaryPart1.pdf>

30 Journal, ie May 24, 2015 <http://www.thejournal.ie/why-the-referendum-passed-2116337-May2015/>

31 RTE news, 24 Jan 2018, <https://www.rte.ie/news/business/2018/0122/935004-oxfam-report-davos/>

32 Sara Burnes 'Almost 800,000 people live in poverty despite improved economy', *The Irish Times* Jan 8, 2018, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/almost-800-000-live-in-poverty-despite-improved-economy-think-tank-1.3348396>

33 Liz Featherstone (ed) *False Choices; the Faux Feminism of Hillary Rodham Clinton*, London: Verso:2016.

34 For a complete stripping down of the elitism of focus groups, see Lisa Featherstone, Talk is Cheap: The Myth of the Focus Group, *The Guardian*, 6 February 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/feb/06/talk-is-cheap-the-myth-of-the-focus-group>

35 As above.

36 Fiona Bloomer, Johanne Devlin Trew, Claire Pierson, Noirin MacNamara, Danielle Mackle, 'Abortion is a workplace issue. Trade Union Survey - North And South Of Ireland. Dublin: UNITE the Union, Unison, Mandate Trade Union, the CWU Ireland, the GMB, Alliance for Choice, Trade Union Campaign to Repeal the 8th.' Dublin 2017, p. 25 [http://www.cwu.ie/\\_uploads/documents/publications/Abortion\\_is\\_a\\_Workplace\\_Issue.pdf](http://www.cwu.ie/_uploads/documents/publications/Abortion_is_a_Workplace_Issue.pdf)