

Gender-Based Human Rights Violations in Ireland, Intergenerational Trauma, and Justice

Olivia Paulson

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Jodi Vandenberg-Daves, Race, Gender, & Sexuality Studies

ABSTRACT

This research project investigates how to achieve justice for survivors of institutionalized abuse and their relatives. Transformative justice responds to harm in a collective, community-based alternative to retributive justice (Kim, 2021). This research is concerned with institutional abuses perpetrated by the Catholic Church and the State from 1922 until 1998 within the Magdalene Laundries and Mother and Baby Homes. Magdalene Laundries consisted of incarceration and forcible hard labor. Mother and Baby Homes institutionalized unmarried mothers and often forced mothers to give up their babies. Research demonstrates that the Irish State has failed in fulfilling its promises of reparations for survivors of Magdalene Laundries (McGettrick et al., 2021; The Clann Project, n.d.). A redress proposal has been created for survivors of Mother and Baby Homes; however, it excludes many people (Ireland Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2021). Meanwhile, the Catholic Church has yet to provide reparations. Relatives of institutionalized women have not been considered for redress, and oral history from relatives has been limited (JFMR, 2017). To understand how to achieve justice and the impact of intergenerational trauma, I have spoken to survivors and their family members. Reproductive trauma is an ongoing experience that may have consequences for future generations. Justice for survivors and relatives requires action from the State, Catholic Church, community, and family.

INTRODUCTION

So, she said, the whole experience was very traumatic, she was really scared. She was so afraid of what would happen to me, when was the last time she would get to see me? And one of the nuns told her, you know, basically, 'You're a disgrace. And you will never, ever have a right to see this baby again, you have ruined this, you have spoiled this, and you will not have a chance.' So, when I met Marie, and we got to know each other. She just said, 'I'm so grateful that you came and found me.' She said, 'I thought that I had no legal right to ever look for you.' She said, 'I didn't plan on looking for you. Because they told me very sternly, you will not ever know what happened to this child.' So, they were really threatening with her. And that's really as much as I know about the treatment in there. (Isabelle Flynn)

Participant, Isabelle Flynn, restates what her birth mother told her about what was experienced in the home. Isabelle's mother decided she could not raise a child at that time in her life and her family chose a Mother and Baby Home for her, St. Patrick's of the Navan Road, Dublin, Ireland. Isabelle was adopted by an Irish family, and she lived in western Ireland until the age of five when her family moved to California. Isabelle was born in the 1980s, which is generally understood to have better living conditions for women and their children in Ireland's Mother and Baby Homes (Redmond, 2018). However, as illustrated by this quote, her mother felt shamed and believed she did not have a legal right to look for her child. Isabelle sought for a connection with her birth mother and was able to develop a relationship after receiving information from a social worker. Isabelle was able to get to know Marie and her family. Her mother later passed from alcoholism, which prompted Isabelle to reevaluate her own drinking habits and has remained sober for the last ten years. Every year she receives a sobriety chip from Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and places it on her mother's grave as a way to honor her. This project intends to analyze themes of ongoing trauma and repairing reproductive harm among participants.

Research Questions

RQ1: How do gender, class, and religion intersect and connect to survivors' and relatives' experiences?

RQ2: Do survivors, family members, and community members experience ongoing trauma?

RQ3: How may justice be achieved?

Magdalene Laundries (1922-1996)

The Magdalene Laundries intended to function as a place where women could seek refuge and repent for their sins. In practice, they were carceral and harsh (Smith, 2018). Women were incarcerated into institutions, run by religious orders, in which they were forced to do hard labor (Smith, 2008). The State claims 10,012 or fewer women were institutionalized in the laundries (The Department of Justice, 2013). This is likely an underestimate as women who entered before 1922 and several laundries were excluded from the data (McGettrick et al., 2021). According to the McAleese Report, women may have been sent to laundries due to criminal convictions, referrals by schools, placements by parents, because they had no home or were poor, or unable to live independently due to disability (The Department of Justice, 2013). Some women had babies while unmarried, experienced sexual assault, or were perceived as “too pretty” (Humphries, 1998). It is estimated that out of 25 women, one would be transferred from a Mother and Baby Home to a Magdalene Laundry (Redmond, 2018).

Estimates of average time institutionalized varies from one year to eight years due to disagreements between the State and independent research conducted by Justice for Magdalenes Research (JFMR, 2017; McGettrick, et al., 2021; The Department of Justice, 2013). Researchers question if the State included women who spent only a few hours or days in the laundries while awaiting trial (McGettrick, et al., 2021). Additionally, the government report excluded women who entered the laundries before 1922 and excluded time spent institutionalized in nursing homes (McGettrick, et al., 2021). Conclusions reached by the State’s report on the Magdalene Laundries include several gaps according to independent researchers (JFMR, 2017; McGettrick, et al., 2021). The punitive conditions of the laundries were evidenced by name changes, religious wardrobes, food deprivation, haircutting, and solitary confinement as punishment (Humphries, 1998; McGettrick, et al., 2021; Smith, 2008; The Department of Justice, 2013).

Mother and Baby Homes (1922-1998)

Connected to the Irish Magdalene Laundries, were Mother and Baby Homes in which unwed mothers were incarcerated into institutions, forced to do hard labor, and give up their babies (Adoption Rights Alliance, n.d.; Redmond, 2018). According to Ireland’s Final Report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes, these homes were in practice from 1922 to 1998, in which an estimated 56,000 mothers and about 57,000 children were institutionalized (Ireland Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2021). As noted within this government report, this is likely an underestimation of about 25,000 women and a larger number of children. The practice of Mother and Baby Homes is not unique to Ireland but likely had the highest rate in the world at this time (Fessler, 2012; Ireland Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2021). Mothers typically spent under a year institutionalized; their children were institutionalized for months to several years (Redmond, 2018). Mothers would have to complete unpaid labor after giving birth unless their family could pay their way out with 100 Euros to the religious orders (Matthews & Steed, 2014).

Thousands of babies died in institutions due to neglect. The rate of infant mortality was considerably higher for “illegitimate” babies than for “legitimate” babies (Redmond, 2018). Adoption was legalized in 1952, but the State was largely exempt from overseeing arrangements in which “illegitimate” children were adopted and sent abroad (Redmond, 2018). Archbishop McQuaid and Cecil Barrett developed adoptive parent criteria which included promising to raise their children Catholic and send their children to Catholic schools (Adoption Rights Alliance, n.d.; Redmond, 2018). As a result of limited oversight, over 2,000 children were trafficked into the United States (Adoption Rights Alliance, n.d.).

Church, State, and the Policing of Sexuality

The institutionalization of women and girls was weaponized by the State and Catholic Church to implement the project of Irish independence. Irish citizens sought to distinguish themselves from colonizers during Irish independence (Smith, 2008; Fischer, 2016). The policing of women's sexuality was part of the project of independent State formation and religiously based. If women were perceived to be sexually impure, they posed a threat to this project of national identity formation and were to be hidden through institutionalization (Smith, 2007). However, as scandals came to light in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Irish people indicated they did not need the Church to rely upon for decisions regarding sex and their family (Calkin & Kaminska, 2020). Even before scandals were known, Redmond (2018) suggests with increased access to secondary education, people in the 1970s and 1980s recognized the Catholic Church was the source of stagnated social progress and personal freedoms. Since the 1986 referendum which upheld the constitutional divorce ban, each morality policy issue has resulted in outcomes opposed by the Catholic Church, including divorce in 1995, gay marriage, and abortion (Henry et al., 2018). Despite a decline in Catholicism, Irish culture and religious beliefs historically contribute to how women are treated regarding bodily autonomy and human rights.

Status of Justice for Survivors

The Irish government has created its own definition of justice. Following the release of the Irish government's McAleese Report on the Magdalene Laundries, the State officially recognized its involvement and apologized to survivors (RTÉ Prime Time, 2013). Eventually, an ex-gratia payment redress scheme was developed for Magdalene survivors. However, religious orders were believed over survivors' accounts in reports to the Department of Justice. Survivors of Magdalene Laundries have not been compensated to the extent they were promised (McGettrick et al., 2021). A Payment Scheme has been approved for survivors of Mother and Baby Homes. However, it excludes people who were in the homes for under six months, which according to Deputy Martin Browne, denies 41% of people who were in the homes redress (Ireland Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2021; Houses of the Oireachtas, 2021). Failures of the Redress Scheme and the Payment Scheme suggest justice from the State has yet to be achieved. As these are State-sponsored human rights violations, it seems unlikely the State will hold itself accountable.

The religious orders that ran Magdalene Laundries and Mother and Baby Homes have yet to see any form of accountability. Religious orders tend to provide limited documentation for survivors and relatives if any documentation is provided at all (McGettrick et al., 2021). If one comes to find their relative has passed while institutionalized, their family member's grave may be unmarked or marked incorrectly (McGettrick et al., 2021). Religious orders perpetrated institutional harm through physical abuse, psychological abuse, and forcible isolation. Similar to the State, religious orders have fallen short in providing redress and repairing the harm perpetrated. Justice may include apologizing, providing access to documents, and dismantling Catholic Church systems that enable maltreatment (i.e., nursing homes for Magdalene women).

Purpose of Research

The purpose of this research is to evaluate how survivors and relatives broadly define justice and how they define justice in reference to these human rights violations. Justice may include action from the Catholic Church and the State, but also the community and family. This approach to justice may be referred to as transformative justice. Transformative justice is a feminist approach to the carceral system in the United States. It intends to approach justice from outside the state, in a collective, community-based alternative (Kim, 2021). While transformative justice may seem unrelated to the issue of justice for human rights violations, at its core it responds to reproduction-related harm and repairs wrongs outside of the State. This approach to justice is valuable as the State and Catholic Church have repeatedly fallen short in providing justice.

It is valuable to consider what survivors and relatives of institutionalized women and girls need to achieve justice. Community members are also necessary for gaining perspectives of these institutions as transformative justice is based on community response. The State may define justice in monetary compensation, but perhaps groups affected by institutional abuse have other needs like seeking gender equality. Reproductive justice is an area of importance as Ireland has violated several underlying rights (McBride, 2014; Delay, 2015). Reproductive justice is defined as, "(1) the right *not* to have a child; (2) the right to *have* a child; and (3) the right to *parent* in safe and healthy environments. In addition, reproductive justice demands sexual autonomy and gender freedom for every human being" (Ross & Solinger, 2017,

p. 9). The State has violated these rights by denying women abortion care, placing women in institutions, and taking away their children. This area of justice has not been discussed with survivors and relatives. Any definition of justice given by a survivor or relative is significant as it lacks research. The Magdalene Oral History Project included interviews with 30 survivors, one relative, and other community members. Participants were not asked to describe their ideas of justice. However, at the Dublin Honors Magdalenes (DHM) Event (2020) survivors did explain several courses of action needed including memorialization and education for the Listening Exercise Report (McGettrick, et al., 2021). Additionally, survivors have spoken out to news outlets stating that the Irish government has failed them (Holland, 2022; O'Brien, 2015). To my knowledge, there are no published studies available on how survivors define justice and see it being carried out.

Scholars have considered the trauma experienced by survivors as ongoing, but neglected others in their circle, like relatives of institutionalized people. Intergenerational trauma can be defined as those experiencing trauma due to their family member's trauma (Bombay et al., 2014). Interviews with relatives of institutionalized women and girls have been conducted for the purpose of collecting an oral history, but questions remain unanswered relating to their ongoing trauma and healing process. Historical trauma is another area that requires attention. Historical trauma refers to multiple attacks against a group of people over several generations, impacting their well-being (Bombay et al., 2014). This trauma may be the reality for Irish women, particularly for poor Irish women, related to the repeated denial of bodily autonomy and reproductive justice. While some politicians have discussed institutional abuse as in the past, the effects of abuses are likely ongoing. It is relevant to discuss with relatives the impact of institutionalizing their family members as they seek justice and heal from trauma. My project seeks to fill this gap by interviewing relatives and survivors about intergenerational and historical trauma

To expand on existing research, I interviewed survivors, family members of institutionalized women, and community members using a feminist methodological approach, which involves attending to power, boundaries, and self-reflection at each stage of the process (Ackerly & True, 2010). I asked participants about their experiences, institutionalized family member(s), family background, how they have coped with abuse, and their idea of justice. This project intends to fill the gaps in research as I considered how participants define justice, experience trauma, and gain new perspectives from relatives and community members.

METHODS

Participants

Participants were recruited through the snowball method. Participants were invited to interview through representatives of survivor groups, Facebook posts, or from hearing about the study from other survivors, relatives, or community members. Interviews were conducted with 11 participants which included adoptee survivors of Mother and Baby Homes (n = 7), a survivor and relative of a woman who was in a Mother and Baby Home and Magdalene Laundry (n = 1), relatives of a woman who was in a Mother and Baby Home (n = 2), and a Facebook community member (n = 1).

Method of Analysis

After reviewing an informed consent form, participants engaged in semi-structured interviews utilizing open-ended questions. Most participants (n = 8) engaged in a Zoom interview. Two participants were interviewed in person. One participant was interviewed over the phone. Interviews lasted between one to two hours. Interviews were recorded to transcribe accurately. Transcriptions were conducted using Otter and Zoom, and then reviewed to make corrections. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were used in transcription documents, unless the participant explicitly requested their name is used. Participants had the opportunity to review their transcripts and decide how their interview information would be used. Transcriptions of interviews were analyzed for reoccurring and significant themes.

RESULTS

RQ1: How do gender, class, and religion intersect and connect to survivors' and relatives' experiences?

The Church policed women's sexuality through shame and incarceration. Gendered ideals of sexuality were described directly relating to the Catholic Church's teachings. Many participants described the intent of these institutions was to hide women as they needed to repent for the sins they had committed. Kenneth Mahony described how he would expect his mother may be treated by her family, and thus, the need for her to be institutionalized

I presume that mother having that she was unable to go back to her family in Ireland, in everybody's story, I suppose 'It's a disgrace to the family, that your child and you're not married, oh get out of this house.' You can imagine. So, she obviously did. She couldn't go outside. So, she sought refuge if you'd like in some place that on the face of it to be a friendly place to go. (Kenneth Mahony)

Kenneth goes on to explain how this ostracism is related to the Church.

But if you, have it, and you come in and you don't have an understanding, because someone told you that this was the way of things as it was in Ireland at the time. That was the way of things, that's what we did. You know, they were sinners. You know, they had sinned against God and the Church and man. 'They became a floozy, get out of my house, off you go.' (Kenneth Mahony)

Poor people were targets of institutionalization and the Catholic Church profited from unpaid labor and trafficking babies. For women who entered institutions, Daly explains unmarried pregnant Irish women who were from working class or rural poor families were often targets of institutionalization (Redmond, 2018). Several participants explained their relatives who were in Mother and Baby Homes and/ or Magdalene Laundries came from lower class families and had difficult lives due to their class. Meanwhile, religious orders profited from the commercial Magdalene Laundries and profited from trafficking babies. As Mary Walsh explains, among several participants, she wishes her mother who was institutionalized had a better life.

And I understand now, what that must have been like. And she had a very tough life. She was married, her husband, my stepfather, just passed away last year. They had a very tough time growing up, and they didn't have a lot of money. She had 11 children, they all reared each other, and life was really, really hard both mentally and physically and I just wish that she had had a better quality of life and that she could have enjoyed life to the fullest which she truly deserved. So yeah. You know, she was such a brave person and couldn't make any of her own choices, I think that's the hardest part. (Mary Walsh)

Several participants also noted the great wealth of the Catholic Church and the lack of compensation it has provided for survivors. While the Pope may have provided an apology, participants repeatedly expressed there must be action in the form of compensation on the part of the Church. As Mary Donovan explained, challenging the Church can be daunting considering the great power and wealth it has, but survivors are not asking for much

But the Church, there has to be ongoing support, you can't just stop because you know the Church is the most powerful and wealthiest establishment in the world. And, you know, we're not greedy by no means, we should be living comfortable lives. (Mary Donovan)

Most participants indicated a distrust for the Catholic Church. Even participants that identified themselves as Catholic, indicated to some extent a distrust for the Catholic Church. This distrust is due to their experiences and/ or relatives' experiences institutionalized, limited acknowledgement of wrongdoing, no compensation provided, or following scandals. A mother and daughter explained how it's possible for one to have faith, but not practice through Church attendance or membership in a parish. Their family member was in a Mother and Baby Home which was kept secret until recently, when the adoptee reached out asking if they may be related. During the interview, the women indicated their horror of what has been uncovered regarding the Catholic Church's human rights abuses.

Now, I'm not against faith, or somebody having some faith. At all. I do believe that everybody should have some spiritual life. And I do, I have faith 100%, have faith. (Nora Kennedy)

But the faith doesn't match the actions, I guess. (Eireann Kennedy)

I don't need an intermediary. I can do it. I can talk to God myself. I don't need someone else telling me how to do it or what to do it or when to do it. You know, it's one of those things. That's a very personal thing, I think. Like choosing perfume, isn't it? (Nora Kennedy)

RQ2: Do survivors, family members, and community members experience ongoing trauma?

Limited or misleading records prevents survivors from accessing basic information and knowing their stories/ families' stories. Adoptees have been fighting for access to their basic information for decades. It has been difficult to receive records from the government as it has been required to meet with a social worker prior to being provided information. Then when records have been provided, it has been largely redacted or the information is incorrect. Most participants expressed limited or misleading records is a source of ongoing stress as it is a time consuming and often disappointing process of trying to acquire basic information like their birth parents' names or information about family medical histories. In reference to having been in a hospital after being born at a Mother and Baby Home, a participant describes the stress of not having access to medical records.

And I have no explanation of where I was for two weeks after I was born. Why was I there? I would like to know, I'm a cancer survivor. I would like to know, why? Was it hereditary? You know, I want to know for my kids, and now I have a granddaughter. I want to be able to give them that history. (Ellen Sullivan)

Another participant indicated they did not feel the trauma hit until they received the misleading paperwork that had their mother's name altered.

Participants expressed ambiguous loss. This refers to when one is unsure of whether their loved one is dead or alive, absent, or present (Boss, 2004). Ambiguous loss is a particularly stressful situation as people experiencing it cannot come to terms with the loss and cannot experience closure (Luster et al., 2009). Along with this sense of the unknown, adoptees also face uncertainty which can relate to the psychological theory of uncertainty reduction which essentially refers to seeking out information to reduce one's uncertainty (Powell & Afifi, 2005). Adoptees may experience ambiguous loss and then seek to reduce their sense of the unknown by requesting records, utilizing search angels or by submitting DNA to websites like Ancestry.com or 23andme. Research by Brashers et al. (2000) indicated uncertainty and ambiguous loss is an ongoing feature of adoption which requires individuals' ability to cope which can be helped through family members' social support (Powell & Afifi, 2005). Adoptees do not only have questions about their birth parents, but also regarding the conditions of the Mother and Baby Homes they were born in. Several participants indicated they felt a sense that something was missing, or something was wrong without being told they were adopted. James Moore explained ambiguous loss and his resilience.

Like I said, I have no conscious memory of being there. Oh well, however, there's a very definite sensation of an emptiness. A blank there, you know. And so, the best that can be done to me there is to rise up and live your best life. (James Moore)

Another participant reflects on how he would routinely consider the whereabouts of his birth mother.

I used to sit in these pubs drinking and looking at women in their 50s and 60s saying, 'I wonder, is that my mom over there?' My birth mother, you know. (Barry Stewart)

For several participants who are adoptees from Mother and Baby Homes, this anxiety or uncertainty persists as records remain inaccessible or provide little to no assurance in understanding their identity. Even when one is able to access records or information about their and their mother's time spent in an institution, it can be traumatizing and disturbing to find out what happened in the home.

The forcible separation of families and limited bonds in institutions have ongoing effects on relationships. Many participants discussed how religious orders purposefully designed these institutions to limit bonds between mother and child, and in other institutions, like industrial schools, siblings were not allowed to form relationships. Research summarized by Gunnar et al., 2000 indicates institutionally reared children are often denied the need for a consistent caregiver to develop an attachment which can result in psychosocial problems including difficulties in attachment relationships, emotion regulation, and peer interactions. Many participants discussed their feelings of distrust and difficulty in forming relationships due to their time spent in an institution. Brian Doyle explained how his experience institutionalized had a lasting impact on his relationships.

And you know, when I gave you my life experiences as a child, you know, those same issues never really go away. You know, night terrors, fear of abandonment, fear of relationships. I was really notorious for being, you know, unable to form any lasting, long-term relationship very much on the surface, very, you know convivial, you know the friendly guy. But no, no, I'm fully, you know, in acknowledgement of that, I think it took 40 years for me to go back and look at it and say

'Yeah, yeah, you really were, in many ways completely mistrustful and distrustful of everybody around you.' (Brian Doyle)

Shame and guilt result in ongoing secrets and play a role in family relationships. Shame and guilt have contributed to the "Culture of denial, secrecy, and hiding that marked much of the church and state practice" (Fischer, 2016, p. 823). This culture of secrecy is also pervasive in communities and families, based on how participants have discussed their birth families and relatives who have been institutionalized. For example, a participant recently found out her aunt had been in a mother and baby home through the adoptee reaching out to her family. While she has been very welcoming and acknowledged her cousin as part of the family, finding out this secret was quite painful.

I actually, I will never forget it. I had so many emotions going through me. Why did I not know? How could? Now I know why she was so fond of me. Why did they not tell me? Why did my own mother not tell me before she died? You know, she must have known. You know, there was anger. There was pain. There was embarrassment. There was shame. You know, the heartache and you know, that's the only reason I think I'd like to be involved. (Nora Kennedy)

Several adoptees also explained their experiences of rejection from their birth family, which in most cases relate to the shame and guilt surrounding unmarried mothers, "Illegitimate children," and adoption. A participant described how his communication ended with his birth mother.

You know, back and forth a few letters. And then I started to hint at coming over. And that was when she just stopped writing, turn 180. Then I wrote to her a couple times. The letters were never answered. (Brian Doyle)

Rejection of adoptees was not an uncommon experience among participants trying to develop a relationship with their birth family members. Due to the culture of secrecy, a family may be unaware that their sister, mother, aunt, or cousin was in a Mother and Baby Home. For mothers coming face to face with the child they were forced to give up, they may not want to revisit the pain of their experience and the shame and guilt that comes along with it, thus resulting in rejection.

Lack of consideration for the impact of institutionalization. Ongoing trauma for adoptees may come in the form of microaggressions. Microaggressions may include microinvalidations which refer to invalidating or negating the experiences of a member of a marginalized group (Garber & Grotevant, 2015). Research indicates adoptees generally experience microaggressions including questioning authenticity, recurring confusion/ ignorance, overly intrusive questions, and public "outing." Several participants that have spent time institutionalized experience similar forms of microaggressions.

When they said, 'Oh a little kid couldn't remember,' I remember exactly where those babies were buried. I remember getting the living crap beat out of me, because I was in a place I wasn't supposed to be. (Ellen Sullivan)

Other participants similarly recounted instances when their experience of ongoing trauma was minimized or discounted entirely. Research conducted by Garber & Grotevant (2015) indicate microaggressions may cause stress and for one to feel stigmatized.

RQ3: How may justice be achieved?

A participant contextualized this concept of justice and injustice in relation to how family members may have sent women to institutions.

We can't minimize the amount of control that both the Church and the government had in our lives. (Brian Doyle).

Another participant similarly questioned the extent to which family members played a role in committing injustices using the concept of mens rea or knowledge of wrongdoing. This perspective is important to avoid oversimplifying the concept of justice vs injustice and to acknowledge the systemic nature of incarcerating women. In response to the question "What is justice? What does it mean to you? Broadly or in this context," participants provided many different responses. It was noted perpetrators facing legal consequences would be unlikely. Participants discussed the roles of the Church, State, family, and community in providing justice.

Acknowledgement of the injustices committed by the State and the Church. The Irish State and the Catholic Church have offered what they deem to be justice in response to harms committed, however, survivors and relatives assert their stories and needs have been left unheard. While the State has

apologized for its role in institutions and provided a report of the abuses, the Magdalene Laundries Commission Report and Mother and Baby Home Commission Report have produced questionable statistics and several statements that are at odds with survivor testimony. This has been referred to as testimonial injustice by NUI Galway which can be defined by Fricker as prejudice experienced by those providing testimony as the hearer does not find them credible (NUI Galway Law Review, n.d.). Survivors who testified for the Mother and Baby Home Commission found that their testimony may not have been included at all or changed to fit the narrative the State intended to produce (McGrath, 2021).

It has been suggested by the United Nations Committee Against Torture that the Irish State has not undertaken a thorough and impartial investigation into abuse in the Magdalene Laundries (OHCHR, 2017). It is also recommended that independent and thorough investigations are carried out regarding Mother and Baby Homes. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women raised similar concerns regarding these investigations as mentioned.

Meanwhile, some religious figures have acknowledged the wrongdoing of the Catholic Church, including Pope Francis in his speech at Phoenix Park in Dublin in 2018. He asked for forgiveness from survivors (Winfield & Alves, 2018). However, nuns have been less apt to admit wrongdoing or ask for forgiveness. In fact, in some cases nuns will reproduce the narrative that the institutions acted as a safe haven for women and in fact they were allowed to leave at their leisure (McGettrick, et al., 2021). This narrative was actually included in the Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation. Lack of acknowledgement from the perpetrators is what many participants described as particularly frustrating.

Here the nuns tell this story, you know, everything was fairly hunky dory. You know, they have been very unrepentant. So, the adoption, the greater adoption community, you know, oh, that sticks in our craw that you know, they should have apologized. And they never really have. (James Moore)

Complete and unredacted records made accessible. As previously discussed, the limited and inaccurate records are a source of trauma for survivors. The Birth Information and Tracing Bill 2022 has been proposed however, several recommendations have been ignored. According to O'Rourke these include the recommendation that every person is entitled to records including information about their treatment and early life information (2022). Another pivotal recommendation was ignored including, "the Bill must provide all affected people, including siblings and relatives of the deceased, with access to the processes set out in the Bill's provisions" (2022) According to O'Rourke, this Bill also restricts the type of information that The Child and Family Agency (TUSLA) and the Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI) must provide to those who request personal files. The Bill also does not require religious orders to preserve and make available information (O'Rourke, 2022). Nearly every participant described the need for records to be made accessible to adoptees, survivors' families, and the public. A participant indicated her desire for records but explained it would not mean "justice" to her, but rather, she considers it her right.

You know, that's just reparation for the past that has happened. The only way that they can read it, as far as I'm concerned, is to give us our records, unaltered records. Give us the truth. Let us make our determination. Let us... that's the only thing to me that will bring any kind of peace to people. While some people may not ever have peace when they find out what's in the records. I'm sure most of us will probably be horrified. But we will know. I shouldn't have to go through 23andme and ancestry.com and search through Church records that don't exist and lies from people that this doesn't happen. And that doesn't happen. It should be there. (Ellen Sullivan)

Another participant similarly emphasized the need for record access, as she searches for her siblings she believes to have been adopted into the United States.

Like, and the same with an adopted baby, it could quite possibly be where my siblings are, you know, they might not even know they're adopted out there. But I am determined to find them. I'm determined, why should we have been denied the rights to our siblings, and adoptees? (Mary Donovan)

Compensation from the Church and the State. As stated, survivors of the Magdalene Laundries have not been compensated to the extent they were promised, and the Redress Scheme proposed for Mother and Baby Homes survivors excludes thousands of people. Interviewees criticized the State for their failures in providing adequate compensation to all survivors of institutionalization. Additionally, participants expressed that the Church is more than wealthy enough to provide some form of

compensation to survivors as a payment for their wrongdoing. A participant explained his disappointment with the Redress Scheme for Mother and Baby Home survivors as people were wrongly excluded.

I just think it's wrong, I think I suppose, talking about justice, that they should all be included. Or, and there should be no exception. So, try the Redress Scheme or not. So, for a justice system, if you're in, then you should be included as well. The timescale got nothing to do with it. If you went through this and you were treated like everybody, then you should be included with everybody. (Kenneth Mahony)

Memorialization and exhumation of mass graves. If one comes to find their relative has passed while institutionalized, their family member's grave may be unmarked or marked incorrectly (McGettrick et al., 2021). In 1993, religious orders exhumed and cremated the remains of St. Mary's Graveyard, which contained the bodies of women who died while at the High Park Magdalene Laundry. To cut costs, nuns had at times two or more bodies in a coffin cremated at one time. This caused difficulties for relatives seeking to claim their family member's remains. For people who died in Mother and Baby Homes, a similar phenomenon of disrespectful burials has become publicized thanks to the work of historian, Catherine Corless, who uncovered the death certificates of 796 children who died in the Tuam home without official burial places. Eventually, the resting place of these children was found to be an old septic tank (Barry, 2017). Other Mother and Baby Homes similarly have hundreds of children's final resting places unaccounted for; religious orders report not knowing the burial locations (Al Jazeera English, 2020). Participants expressed that the grounds of institutions should be respected due to the suspected mass graves. Respecting grounds may look like memorialization and exhumation. This topic is important as developers intend to build on lands of Mother and Baby Homes. Recently, developers are seeking permission to build apartments at the Bessboro Home in which 859 infants' burial places remain unknown (Roche, 2021). A participant explains why it is necessary to treat these grounds with care.

That's sacred ground. It's sacred ground. I don't know that you could exhume them. But I think you definitely need; they need to be remembered. They had a name, they did belong to somebody somewhere, and you let them die. You let them die. And that's so wrong. It breaks my heart when I think about it. You know, and many of the mothers didn't even know what happened to their child. (Ellen Sullivan)

Support from family members, including a willingness of birth families to meet adoptees.

When asked how family may play a role in justice, participants pointed out family members who were involved in overseeing that a woman be sent to an institution likely have passed. However, when asked regarding the role of family in repairing the harm committed, participants discussed challenging secrecy and allowing adoptees to at least have an opportunity to meet their birth families. A participant explained her view that justice may never occur, but she still wanted to do right by her cousin who was adopted into America by challenging secrecy and welcoming her as a member of their family.

I don't think it'll ever be made right. That's my honest opinion. I think that they think that I was wrong to bring it up again, it should have been left hidden. I don't believe that and I'm a firm believer in being fair and equitable and honest and decent. And I can't hide behind anything like that. It just doesn't sit well with me. I'm in the business of saving lives, of caring for people, of helping sick people, and how could I? I'd be a hypocrite if I was anything other than to want to be disassociated with it, which I think would just be hypocrisy. (Nora Kennedy).

Adoptees often noted birth families may play a role in providing to some extent a means to repair the connection broken. Participants also explained this does not necessarily mean a close relationship needs to develop, just the opportunity to meet one another and the potential for some kind of relationship.

So, I would think here, at a minimum, people need to have the opportunity to be able to go and knock on the door and say, 'Hello, here I am. I just wanted to say hello and see, could we talk?' Now they're totally free to say, 'No, I don't want to talk.' And at that point, you have to respect what they say and walk away. And then they're protected by stalking laws if you didn't, they have their right to privacy, it's protected. But they should also, at a minimum, like what you just asked from the family. At a minimum, they should be afforded that opportunity without protection from the government to come face to face with the child that they had to surrender. And at least say, yay or nay. And accordingly, the [adopted] child... has to be accepting of whether it's yay or nay, whether they like it or not, they have to accept that and move on. (James Moore)

Community support has been helpful in the healing process; more is needed. Community has an important role to play considering the repeated failures of the Church and the State in providing any form of justice or resolution to survivors. Community can come in many forms, including a network of friends, the local community, for some people it could mean their parish, and even Facebook groups. As mentioned, information about the project was posted to Facebook groups that were dedicated to survivors, relatives, and others that want to be involved. Many participants expressed that Facebook allowed them to connect with other people who have had similar experiences, read others' stories, and share their own and receive support in return. A participant discussed her experiences in Facebook groups with other survivors.

And my healing, I think when I talk with people and connect with them, I think we share a lot. And that's what I love about these groups. It doesn't matter. You never met them before. How many people can you reach out to where you can actually say how you feel? Or you can actually say, 'I think this was really wrong for me, this is how I felt,' and you're not being questioned, or you're not being ridiculed, or you're not being told, 'It's all in your mind.' There's that camaraderie there and support. (Mary Walsh)

Community support can provide repair in a sense that testimonies are believed and not ignored or discounted as has been the practice of the State and the Church. While the community may not be able to attend to all survivor needs in seeking justice, it may provide some sense of acknowledgement. These communities additionally work together in organizing events, protests, as well as uplifting sources of research and pieces of writing or other art forms.

Participants also discussed other ways local communities may be able to provide justice including education on the human rights violations as part of Irish history, providing care to survivors (i.e., accessible mental health services), and respecting the burial grounds.

Improved treatment of women in Ireland. Participants that live in Ireland or lived there for an extended period of time were asked the status of women in Ireland. Participants generally expressed improvements in the realm of motherhood, however there were concerns of gender-based violence as an ongoing issue. While in Ireland, a primary school teacher, Ashling Murphy was murdered in broad daylight by a stranger as she went for a jog. A participant discussed other instances of violence against women suggesting this issue is ongoing.

You had Ashling Murphy last week. You had Nadine Lott two years ago killed by her ex-partner in front of her six-year-old daughter. I mean, there were signs and red flags already there. There should have been something put in place for us as women, we should be allowed to carry a taser or something to protect us. Tasers are illegal here. We can't, we would be prosecuted, baseball bats apparently are illegal. So how do we protect ourselves as women? Lock ourselves in our homes and don't go outside the door? That's shameful because we should be entitled to live our lives as free as men are...You have the young girl Ana Kriegel, who was murdered by young boys, young underage boys...You know, women are just treated as second class citizens. And it needs to change, and it needs to stop. (Mary Donovan)

Other participants similarly expressed a need for change to address how women are treated as there is a pattern of gender-based violence. Participants primarily discussed treatment of women in terms of facing violence and few mentioned reproductive justice issues.

DISCUSSION

Reproductive trauma is an ongoing experience that may have consequences for future generations. Trauma among adoptees is due to the forcible separation from their birth mothers, institutionalization, and lack of closure in seeking family histories. Reproductive trauma may also present itself through finding out a family member was forcibly institutionalized and forced to give up their child. Justice for survivors and relatives requires action from the State, Catholic Church, community, and family. As made abundantly clear by participants, the State and Church have repeatedly fallen short in providing what they deem to be justice, such as access to unredacted records and acknowledgement of wrongdoing. Additionally, participants described how family and the community have a role to play in repairing harm. Family can challenge the culture of secrecy by welcoming adoptees and supporting survivors. The community can do more to support survivors by standing with them as they demand justice, respecting burial grounds, and remembering what happened in these institutions.

This research considered perspectives from relatives of people who were institutionalized. Two participants were relatives, while all other participants except one, were both relatives and survivors of institutionalization. They offered a unique perspective as they seek justice for themselves and for loved ones who were institutionalized. Additionally, this research expanded on oral history interviews with survivors and relatives by explicitly asking about what justice means to them. Again, the State and Church may provide their own ideas of justice through compensation or apologies, but the most important definition of justice or repairing harm must come from people who have been directly and indirectly impacted by these human rights violations.

The results of this study indicate the effects of reproductive trauma are ongoing. Reproductive trauma experienced by survivors and relatives may even have consequences for future generations as families have been forcibly separated and struggle to rebuild relationships due to records remaining inaccessible and pervasive secrecy. Ambiguous loss was shown among participants as a source of stress and prolonged anxiety. This study also communicates clear needs survivors and relatives have in achieving justice which includes family and community action. Beyond this research, solidarity is needed to support survivors and relatives in their efforts to have their voices heard. The State and Catholic Church have failed and will continue to fail in providing repair and justice if these groups do not listen to survivors. More independent groups like the United Nations, Human Rights Watch, or the International Criminal Court (ICC) may be necessary to achieve justice as the perpetrators of human rights violations seem unlikely to hold themselves accountable. Thus, with the case *Elizabeth Coppin v. Ireland* being heard by the United Nations Committee Against Torture, it remains to be seen if independent bodies may provide justice (Gregg, 2022). Also, KRW Law in 2021 requested the ICC to investigate whether institutional abuse amounts to crimes against humanity (Fagan, 2021). Ultimately, there is more to be done for survivors and family members, as reproductive trauma is an ongoing experience.

Several limitations are present in this study, including the limited participants that were interviewed. Due to time constraints of conducting interviews, transcribing, and analyzing, it would be difficult to interview more participants as an individual researcher. The means in which participants were asked to interview may also limit perspectives, as survivors and relatives may not be on Facebook or be a member of a survivor group. Additionally, more community members' perspectives would have been valuable. No women from Magdalene Laundries or women who gave birth in Mother and Baby Homes were interviewed. Future research should consider further interviewing community members on justice for people who were institutionalized. Future research should question how being an Irish Traveller may impact one's experiences institutionalized and one's efforts in seeking justice. Lastly, research needs to be done focusing on Protestant institutions, experiences of survivors, and the process of justice.

Reproductive trauma caused by institutionalization is ongoing for survivors and relatives. Justice has yet to be achieved as the State and Catholic Church have failed to listen to survivors and relatives. Utilizing the perspective of transformative justice, participants expressed means by which family and community can repair harm. This approach to justice is needed due to described failures of perpetrators in providing justice and because harm can be somewhat repaired or alleviated through other means (i.e., families welcoming adoptees and challenging secrecy). This research is valuable in that relatives' perspectives were considered and questions of justice or repairing harm was explicitly asked of participants. While institutions have been closed for over twenty years, the fight for justice is ongoing, as is the trauma experienced by survivors and relatives.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I extend my gratitude to the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse for providing me the Undergraduate Research and Creativity Grant which made this research possible. I would like to thank each of my participants for being willing to share their experiences and perspectives on justice. Additionally, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Vandenberg-Daves for assisting me on every aspect of this project. Finally, I want to thank my friends and family for supporting and encouraging me to research these issues further.

REFERENCES

Al Jazeera English. (2020, July 9). *Ireland's mother and Baby scandal (part 1) | people and power*.

YouTube. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F65Mc3oBylk>

Ackerly, B.A. & True, J. (2010). *Doing feminist research in political and social science*. Red Globe Press.

Barry, D. (2017, October 28). *The Lost Children of Tuam*. The New York Times. Retrieved from

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/10/28/world/europe/tuam-ireland-babies-children.html>

Bombay, A., Matheson, K., & Anisman, H. (2014). The intergenerational effects of Indian residential schools: Implications for the concept of historical trauma. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 51(3), 320–338. <https://doi-org.libweb.uwlax.edu/10.1177/1363461513503380>

Boss, P. (2004). Ambiguous loss research, theory, and practice: Reflections after 9/11. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66, 551–566.

Calkin, S., & Kaminska, M. E. (2020). Persistence and Change in Morality Policy: The Role of the Catholic Church in the Politics of Abortion in Ireland and Poland. *Feminist Review*, 124(1), 86–102. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0141778919894451>

Clann project witness statements. Clann: Ireland's unmarried mothers and their children. (n.d.).

Retrieved from <http://clannproject.org/clannarchive/statements/>.

Delay, C. (2015, December 10). *Abortion in Ireland: The more things change...* Nursing Clio. Retrieved from <https://nursingclio.org/2015/12/10/abortion-in-ireland-the-more-things-change/>.

Discrimination and prejudice against adopted people. Adoption Rights Alliance. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://adoption.ie/>

Fagan, M. (2021, May 18). *ICC asked to INVESTIGATE mother and baby homes and Magdalene Laundries*. Irish Examiner. Retrieved from <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-40291748.html>.

Fessler, A. (Director). (2012). *A Girl Like Her* [Film]. Women Make Movies.

Final report of the commission of investigation into mother and baby homes. The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. (2021). Retrieved from <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/mbhcoi/#>

Fischer, C. (2016). Gender, Nation, and the Politics of Shame: Magdalen Laundries and the Institutionalization of Feminine Transgression in Modern Ireland. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society*, 41(4), 821–843. <https://doi-org.libweb.uwlax.edu/10.1086/685117>

Garber, K. J., & Grotevant, H. D. (2015). "You were adopted?!": Microaggressions toward adolescent adopted individuals in same-race families. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 43(3), 435–462. <https://doi-org.libweb.uwlax.edu/10.1177/0011000014566471>

Gregg, G. (Director). (2022). *Ireland's Dirty Laundry* [Film]. RTÉ.

Gunnar, M. R., Bruce, J., & Grotevant, H. D. (2000). International adoption of institutionally reared children: Research and policy. *Development and Psychopathology*, 12(4), 677–693. <https://doi-org.libweb.uwlax.edu/10.1017/S0954579400004077>

Henry, M. D., Emma, G.H., & Sinead, B. (2018, May 26). *Ireland votes by landslide to legalise abortion*. The Guardian. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/26/ireland-votes-by-landslide-to-legalise-abortion>.

Holland, K. (2022, January 19). *Mother and baby homes survivors demand changes to 'insulting' scheme*. The Irish Times. Retrieved from <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/mother-and-baby-homes-survivors-demand-changes-to-insulting-scheme-1.4780713>

Houses of the Oireachtas. (2021, November 23). *Dáil éireann debate*. House of the Oireachtas.

- Retrieved from <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2021-11-23/15/>.
- Humphries, S. (Director). (1998). *Sex in a cold climate* [Film]. Testimony Films.
- Ireland. OHCHR. (2017). Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Countries/ENACARRegion/Pages/IEIndex.aspx>.
- Justice for Magdalenes Research. (2017, June 13). *About the Magdalene laundries*. Retrieved from <http://jfmresearch.com/home/preserving-magdalene-history/about-the-magdalene-laundries/>
- Kim, M. E. (2021). Transformative justice and restorative justice: Gender-based violence and alternative visions of justice in the United States. *International Review of Victimology*, 27(2), 162–172. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0269758020970414>
- Luster, T., Qin, D., Bates, L., Johnson, D., & Rana, M. (2009). The Lost Boys of Sudan: Coping with ambiguous loss and separation from parents. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 79(2), 203–211. <https://doi-org.libweb.uwlax.edu/10.1037/a0015559>
- Matthews, D., & Steed, M. (2014, June 5). *How mid-century Ireland dealt with unwed mothers and their children, and why we're talking about it today*. Vox. Retrieved from <https://www.vox.com/2014/6/5/5779902/how-mid->
- McBride, H. (2014, August 26). *I am not a vessel: Ireland's reproductive rights*. Nursing Clio. Retrieved from <https://nursingclio.org/2014/08/26/i-am-not-a-vessel-irelands-reproductive-rights/>.
- McGettrick, et al., (2021). *Ireland and the Magdalene Laundries: A campaign for justice*. I.B. Tauris.
- McGrath, P. (2021, June 3). *Mother-and-baby home testimonies a 'waste of time'*. RTE.ie. Retrieved from <https://www.rte.ie/news/2021/0603/1225885-survivors-commission/>
- O'Brien, C. (2015, July 28). *Adoption case study: 'it's a tragedy I wasn't given My Birth Cert'*. The Irish Times. Retrieved from <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/adoption-case-study-it-s-a-tragedy-i-wasn-t-given-my-birth-cert-1.2299062>
- O'Rourke, M. (2022, January 21). *Birth information and tracing bill 2022: An analysis*. Medium. Retrieved from <https://maeveorourke.medium.com/birth-information-and-tracing-bill-2022-an-analysis-e7705eb5ef7>
- Powell, K. A., & Afifi, T. D. (2005). Uncertainty management and adoptees' ambiguous loss of their birth parents. *Journal of Social & Personal Relationships*, 22(1), 129–151. <https://doi-org.libweb.uwlax.edu/10.1177/0265407505049325>
- Redmond, P. J. (2018). *The Adoption Machine: The dark history of Ireland's mother and baby homes and the inside story of how Tuam 800 became a global scandal*. Merrion Press.
- Report of the inter-departmental committee to establish the facts of state involvement with the magdalen laundries*. The Department of Justice. (2013). Retrieved From <http://www.justice.ie/en/jelr/pages/magdalenrpt2013>
- Roche, B. (2021, March 10). *Developers appeal refusal for planning permission at Bessborough*. The Irish Times. Retrieved from <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/developers-appeal-refusal-for-planning-permission-at-bessborough-1.4506205>
- Ross, & Solinger, R. (2017). *Reproductive justice: an introduction* (1st ed., Vol. 1). University of California Press. <https://doi.org/10.1525/j.ctv1wxsth>

- RTÉ Prime Time. (2013, February 19). *RTÉ prime time - magdalene laundry apology (19/2/13)*. YouTube. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fUO1HkE3wNE>.
- Smith, J. M. (2007). The Magdalene Sisters: Evidence, Testimony ... Action? *Signs*,32(2), 431-458. doi:10.1086/508375
- Smith, J. M. (2008). *Ireland's Magdalen Laundries and the nation's architecture of containment*. Manchester University Press.
- Smith, J. M. (2018, March 15). *Stephen E King Chair Lecture by James Smith (3/7/18)*. YouTube. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W5rr1lwXm50>.
- Testimonial injustice: The prevailing injustices faced by the victims of the mother and baby homes*. NUI Galway Law Review. <https://www.lawreview.nuigalway.ie/the-student-voice/testimonial-injustice-the-prevailing-injustices-faced-by-the-victims-of-the-mother-and-baby-homes>
- Winfield, N., & Alves, H. (2018, August 27). *Pope Francis apologizes for Catholic Church's past 'crimes' in Ireland – National*. Global News. Retrieved from <https://globalnews.ca/news/4410364/pope-francis-apologizes-ireland/>