

# **Media, Sport and Ireland Symposium, NUI Galway, 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> May 2022**

**Room: GO10, Hardiman Research Building/Moore Institute, NUI Galway**

**Programme (see below for abstracts and biographical notes)**

**Thursday, May 19<sup>th</sup>**

**10.30am. – 11.00am. Registration, Tea/Coffee**

**11.00am. – 11.15am. - Welcome and Introduction**

Seán Crosson (NUI Galway) and Marcus Free (Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick)

**11.15am. – 1.00pm. – Panel 1 – Chair: Niamh Kitching (Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick)**

Colm Kearns (Dublin City University) and Gary Sinclair (Dublin City University) (additional non-presenting authors: Jack Black (Sheffield Hallam University); Mark Doidge (University of Brighton); Thomas Fletcher (Leeds Beckett University); Dan Kilvington (Leeds Beckett University); Katie Liston (University of Ulster); Theo Lynn (DCU); Pierangelo Rosati (DCU)) –

‘A scoping review into academic research conducted on online hate and sport’

Michael Lang (NUI Galway) – ‘Sentiment analysis of social media commentary relating to amateur athletes and volunteers within the Gaelic Athletic Association’

Ciarán Ryan (Dundalk Institute of Technology) – ‘Mud, sweat and cameras: Irish trail and mountain running vlogging’

Matt Nesbitt (University of Ulster) – ‘Media interpretation of sports-related concussion in Irish rugby union: reinforcing or reshaping the sport ethic?’

**1.00pm. – 1.45pm. – Buffet lunch**

**1.45pm – 3.30pm. – Panel 2 – Chair: Katie Liston (University of Ulster)**

Aine Hollywood (University College Dublin) and Dearbhla Jordan (Sport Ireland) – ‘The representations of female athletes and sports in the Irish print media’

Cliona O’Leary (former RTÉ Deputy Head of Sport) – ‘The creation of gender equality in the sports media: designing and implementing a change framework – a media professional’s reflection’

Niamh Kitching (Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick) – “‘Play like the lady you are’”: ladyball and the launch of a marketing campaign for women’s Gaelic football’

Maedhbh Ní Chumhaill (NUI Galway) and Seán Crosson (NUI Galway) – “‘Exposing force’”: the Covid-19 pandemic and media coverage of women’s sports in Ireland’

**3.30pm. – 4pm. Tea/Coffee**

**4pm. – 5.30pm. – Panel 3 – Chair: Neil O’Boyle (Dublin City University)**

John Affleck (Penn State University) – ‘Pitching football: why are Americans paying to see their sport in Dublin?’

Connell Vaughan (Technological University Dublin) and Michael O’Hara (Technological University Dublin) – ‘The Rhetorical use of Philosophy and Style; The Reform Agenda in Irish Soccer Management’

Stephen Boyd (Trinity College Dublin and Institute of Art, Design and Technology) – ‘Surfáil sna scannáin: the history and cultural politics of the Irish surf film genre’

**7.30pm. – Conference Dinner, Il Vicolo, The Bridge Mills, Dominick St Lower, Galway**

**Friday 20<sup>th</sup> May**

**9.45am. – 11.30am. – Panel 4 – Chair: Michael Lang (NUI Galway)**

Siobhan Doyle (Technological University Dublin and National Museum of Ireland) – ‘The GAA, media and national anthem: protocols, identity and object rituals’

Carolin Schmitz (Technische Universität Dortmund) – “‘Preserving Irishness’”: The GAA between inclusivity and exclusivity’

Marcus Free (Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick) – “‘New Gaels’? Immigration, Irishness and sport in recent Irish broadcasting’

Daithi McMahon (University of Derby) – ‘Tuned-in for the throw-in: the Irish diaspora as transnational sports radio listeners’

**11.30am. - 12.00pm. – Tea/ Coffee**

**12.00pm. – 13.45pm. – Panel 5 – Chair: Katie Liston (University of Ulster)**

Aoife Sheehan (Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick) and Niamh Kitching (Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick) – “‘That woman’s voice is so annoying’”: Exploring the experiences of women sports journalists, reporters, and contributors in sports media’

Conor Heffernan (University of Ulster) – ‘The Rasslin Irish: Becky Lynch, the girl from Baldoyle’

Payam Ansari (Dublin City University) and Gary Sinclair (Dublin City University) – ‘Factors shaping contemporary women’s football fandom in Ireland’

Kieran O’ Leary (IPSOS), Benny Cullen (Sport Ireland), Elizabeth Loughren (Sport Ireland) and Brian Doyle (Sport Ireland) – ‘Researching the Olympic spirit’

**13.45pm. – 2.15pm. – Buffet lunch**

**2.15pm. – 2.45pm. - Concluding remarks**

Seán Crosson (NUI Galway)

Marcus Free (Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick)

Niamh Kitching (Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick)

Katie Liston (University of Ulster)

Neil O’Boyle (Dublin City University)

## **Panels, Abstracts and Biographical Notes**

**Thursday, May 19<sup>th</sup>**

**11.15am. – 1.00pm. – Panel 1 – Chair: Niamh Kitching (Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick)**

**Colm Kearns (Dublin City University) and Gary Sinclair (Dublin City University) (additional non-presenting authors: Jack Black (Sheffield Hallam University); Mark Doidge (University of Brighton); Thomas Fletcher (Leeds Beckett University); Dan Kilvington (Leeds Beckett University); Katie Liston (University of Ulster); Theo Lynn (DCU); Pierangelo Rosati (DCU))**

### **‘A scoping review into academic research conducted on online hate and sport’**

The rise of online hate speech in sport is a growing concern, with fans, players and officials subject to racist, sexist and homophobic abuse (in addition to many other prejudices) via social media platforms. While hate speech and discrimination have always been problems in sport, the growth of social media has seen them exacerbated exponentially. As a consequence, policy makers, sport governing bodies and grassroots anti-hate organisations are largely left playing catch-up with the rapidly shifting realm of online hate. Scholars have attempted to fill this vacuum with research into this topic, but such is the evolving nature of the issue that research has been diverse and fragmentary. We offer a scoping review into the scholarship of online hate in sport in order to encourage and facilitate further research into this urgent issue. Our review will achieve this through offering a comprehensive cataloguing of previously employed methodologies, case studies and conclusions. In doing so, it will not only equip future researchers with a concise overview of existing research in the field, but also illuminate areas and approaches in need of further examination. Specifically, we outline which online communication platforms have been focused on, the particular perpetrators and target groups that have been examined, and the subtypes of hate and prejudice that have been explored. Furthermore, we expound on the significance of these choices and trends with a view to paving the way for future researchers to build upon them more effectively.

### **Biographical notes:**

**Gary Sinclair** is an Associate Professor of Marketing at DCU and head of the Subcultures Lab in the Irish Institute of Digital Business. He has published extensively in the area of consumer behaviour using qualitative methods.

**Colm Kearns** is a postdoctoral researcher at DCU's Irish Institute for Digital Business. He is the co-author of the BAI-funded report 'RTE and Covid-19: Diversity and Public Needs.' He has published papers on the intersection of sport, advertising and national identity in journals such as *Television and New Media*, *Sport in Society*, and *Irish Communication Review*, in addition to having a chapter featured in the recently published collection, *Sport, the Media and Ireland: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*.

### **Michael Lang (NUI Galway) – ‘Sentiment analysis of social media commentary relating to amateur athletes and volunteers within the Gaelic Athletic Association’**

The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), with close on half a million members around the globe, proudly proclaims itself as the world's largest amateur sporting association. As an organisation, it relies heavily on a spirit of volunteerism, driven by a strong sense of attachment to place and an enthusiasm for the cultural heritage of Gaelic games. A worrying trend in recent years, which threatens to undermine the willingness of volunteers within the GAA, is the growth in the level of vitriolic attacks on social media directed against match officials, coaches, amateur athletes, and administrators. This phenomenon, of course, is not unique to Irish sport. In several countries, sports referees have experienced alarming levels of abuse (Clelland, 2018; Webb, 2020). Prior research by Clelland (2014) in the UK has also examined how social media provided a channel for racism in football, as was again seen in the wake of the recent UEFA Euro 2020 final. In their sentiment analysis of sports-related Tweets in Arabic nations, Alqmase et al (2021) produced a useful taxonomic framework of emotions, ranging from anti-fanatic (respect, affection, etc.) to fanatic (passion, hatred, agitation, aggression). Meggs & Ahmed (2021) present an analysis of on-line abuse of athletes on Twitter, classifying derogatory comments into global projections without reference to sport (e.g. "you're a loser"), global projections with reference to sport (e.g. "lazy over-rated player") and specific projections with personal context (e.g. "you're a disgrace to your family"). Other studies have looked at reactions on social media to referees' decisions (Kolbinger & Knopp, 2020) and mid-game incidents (Lucas et al., 2017; Ozturkcan et al., 2019, Fan et al., 2020). Using these existing frameworks, and building on the lexicon-based machine learning approach deployed in a number of previous studies (Aloufi & El Saddik, 2017; Wunderlich & Memmert, 2020; Patel, 2020), this study proposes to conduct a sentiment analysis of social media commentary pertaining to selected Gaelic games events in the past twelve months. The outcome of the study will be to form a better understanding of the extent of on-line abuse directed against members of the GAA, which was recently referred to by a leading official as "a major cancer on our association" that is causing tremendous distress to sportspersons and their families (Connacht GAA, 2021).

### **References**

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- Wunderlich, F., & Memmert, D. (2020). Innovative approaches in sports science: lexicon-based sentiment analysis as a tool to analyze sports-related Twitter communication. *Applied Sciences*, 10(2), 431.

### **Biographical note:**

Michael Lang is an Associate Professor at the School of Business & Economics, National University of Ireland, Galway. His principal research interests are data analytics, information systems security, and information systems education. He is currently the IT Officer of Mayo GAA and a former member of the GAA National Research Committee.

### **Ciarán Ryan (Dundalk Institute of Technology) – ‘Mud, sweat and cameras: Irish trail and mountain running vlogging’**

Trail and mountain running – forms of off-road running – are niche sporting interests. It is unsurprising then that they receive limited attention from traditional media outlets (newspapers, radio, and television). When they do appear, the narrative tends to veer towards the extreme (e.g. multi-day ultrarunning exploits; dangerous terrain and/or conditions, etc.), and the coverage is more novel than that of other sports. As a response, those invested in the sport create their own media content, utilizing a range of ‘new media’ platforms, such as podcasts, social media, and vlogs (video blogs). Where the latter method differs to other types of sports media is that the content creator often tends to be an active participant. Over the past decade, numerous YouTube

channels have emerged internationally where audiences are brought on runs and races from the point-of-view of the runner.

This paper specifically explores a number of Irish trail running vloggers and their produsage (Bruns, 2008). Their work ranges from professionally-crafted and edited productions to decidedly amateur footage shot on smartphones. Combining content analysis with field interviews, the paper examines the value and appeal of such online videos, which tend to take a ‘warts and all’ approach to covering the sport – runners fall, lose blood, vomit, and so on. Emotionality is central to these storylines; some theorists claim that contemporary culture is awash with emotional displays (e.g. Furedi, 2004), whereas others suggest that emotions have always been a facet of social interaction (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019). The paper questions the extent to which this construction of the emotional journey of the runner plays a role in attracting people to participating in the sport, and what type of representation it offers to a non-running audience.

### **Biographical Note:**

**Ciarán Ryan** is a lecturer at the Department of Creative Arts, Media and Music at Dundalk Institute of Technology, where he is also a member of the Creative Arts Research Centre (CARC). He was awarded his PhD from Mary Immaculate College (University of Limerick) in 2015. Current research areas include fan cultures (particularly in music and sports) and fan and alternative media.

### **Matt Nesbitt (University of Ulster) – ‘Media Interpretation of Sports-Related Concussion in Irish Rugby Union: Reinforcing or Reshaping the Sport Ethic?’**

Using Kevin Young’s suggestion that “sports injury reaches most people indirectly as a set of images transmitted by the mass media” (2004, p.13) as inspiration, and influenced by Anderson and Kian’s (2012) study of the media portrayal of Aaron Rodgers’ sports-related concussion (SRC), this paper examines the role that the Irish media performs in promoting narratives surrounding SRC, with a focus on men’s rugby union. How athletes perceive injury, and react to them when they occur, relates to the underlying socio-cultural norms of sport. As sport was created as a male space (which actively excluded women), cultural norms have strong ties with hegemonic forms of masculinity. Crucial, therefore, is the extent to which such masculinities - and the associated sporting norms - encourage a stoic, resilient approach to pain and injury; as reflected in the ‘sport ethic’ (Hughes & Coakley, 1991). Social acceptance into sporting subcultures is premised on an acceptance of risk and denial of pain. However, given growing concerns over brain injuries in sport, which Malcolm (2019) labels a concussion ‘crisis’, arguments have been made on the extent to which masculinities may be ‘softening’ as athletes become increasingly aware of the risk of neurodegeneration and the resultant need to adopt more cautious, self-preservational approaches, representing a fundamental challenge to cultural norms. Drawing on the work of Anderson and Kian (2012), this paper examines the media coverage of two elite Irish rugby players - Johnny Sexton and Luke Marshall – and their head injuries. Analysing the coverage of each players’ respective concussion experiences from three widely-circulated national daily newspapers on the island of Ireland, this paper critiques the extent to which the media’s presentation of SRC

demonstrates a challenge to the traditional norms of sport, and an alignment with the socio-cultural shift towards a more precautionous approach to such injuries.

### **Biographical note:**

**Matt Nesbitt** is a third year PhD researcher based in the Sport & Exercise Science Research Institute (SESRI) at Ulster University where he is examining the socio-cultural factors surrounding sports-related concussion (SRC) within Irish women's rugby union, focusing on the lived experiences of SRC amongst female players. Prior to beginning his research, Matt gained a MSc in Management at Queen's University Belfast (2017-2018) and completed his undergraduate studies at Ulster University, gaining a BSc in Sports Studies (2008-2011). Matt spent the interim years working in the health & fitness industry as a personal trainer and fitness instructor in Belfast.

### **1.45pm – 3.30pm. – Panel 2 – Chair: Katie Liston (University of Ulster)**

#### **Aine Hollywood (University College Dublin) and Dearbhla Jordan (Sport Ireland) – ‘The representations of female athletes and sports in the Irish print media’**

**Purpose:** This study investigated the representation of female athletes in the Irish print media in 2019 in order to assess whether an increase in print media coverage of female athletes can be observed. This study assessed the visibility of female athletes and women's sport and therefore links directly to the Sport Ireland Women in Sport Policy, and one of its particular objectives in the area of visibility: “Increase the visibility and profile of our female role models in sport” (Sport Ireland, 2019).

**Methodology:** Between the 28th October 2019 – 21st December 2019, 5 newspapers (3 of which had a Sunday edition) were collected to record the total frequency of articles, the total frequency of pictures, the total column area (cm<sup>2</sup>) of articles and the total area (cm<sup>2</sup>) of pictures dedicated to women's, men's and gender neutral sport. Newspapers were collected on a total of 15 days: eight weekdays and seven weekends. The method was replicated from the Packet et al. (2014) study and the 2015 study undertaken within Sport Ireland.

**Conclusion:** This analysis found that 4% of sports coverage was given female athletes and sports, with less than 6% coverage being the general average across similar studies conducted. The number of women participating in sport is growing at a linear rate and women compete on an equal level of professionalism and elitism as men in many sports. A gender imbalance in sports reporting may have significant negative impacts on female participation in sport and physical activity, even with the successes in gender neutrality at high-profile events such as the Olympic and Paralympic Games (Packer et al., 2014).

The media as an establishment has the potential to significantly influence the public's perceptions and knowledge of a variety of topics including that of sport and is therefore a critical tool in the advancement or the retrogression of a balanced representation of female and male sport. With more and more funding being allocated to Women in Sport programs, the importance of representation in the media is emphasised, and outlets should be actively aiming towards equal reporting of genders within sport.



**Biographical notes:**

Áine Hollywood is a MSc Sport Management student at University College Dublin, where she will conduct a research project in gender framing of athletes at the Olympic Games on Twitter. She has a background in Sport Science, having completed a Bachelor's of Science in Sport and Exercise Science at the University of Leeds, during which she completed a 9-month internship in the Research Department of Sport Ireland in 2019-2020. An Irish-Luxembourgish national, Áine was raised in Luxembourg where she competed in swimming throughout her childhood, competing at junior level for the Luxembourg National Team. Áine continues to develop her love of sport through her studies and career.

**Cliona O'Leary (former RTÉ Deputy Head of Sport) – 'The creation of gender equality in the sports media: designing and implementing a change framework – a media professional's reflection'**

The greatest gender inequalities in the media exist in sport. 40% of all sports participants globally are women, yet only 10% of media sport staff are women, (AP, 2018) and 4% of sports media coverage is women's sport (UNESCO, 2018). Why is it like this and what can be done to change that landscape? And what can the sports media environment, and the challenges faced in changing that paradigm, teach us about successfully taking on the status quo in other industries and corporate settings? I will explore this question in this paper, from my personal and professional experience, working in sport within public service media for just under 25 years. Gender inequality is prevalent across the sports ecosystem, and the role of the media, particularly public service media, is central to promoting inclusivity in our societies. I will discover what invisible processes and structural barriers are inhibiting progress by highlighting the unconscious biases within all of us and the man-made world of sports broadcasting. Up-to-date, continuous data is critical for forward momentum - this is lacking in Ireland and Internationally. SVT in Sweden are the leading lights in broadcasting, with equal sports coverage as a standard operating principle. I will share my insights on measurement and target-setting for continuous change, drawing on my experience working on the creation and implementation of RTÉ's Women in Sport 20x20 strategy. I'll look at the achievements and challenges. In my opinion, the imposition of monitoring for gender balance is essential for positive progression in the distribution of men's and women's sports across the media. In addition, measures to improve gender equality and diversity need to be recognised as a change project within business more generally, not just in media, and maintaining it as a priority is essential for it to be successful and sustainable.

**Biographical note:**

A member of the Olympic Federation's Gender Equality Commission, Former Chair of the European Broadcast Union's (EBU) Women in Sport Expert Group, and Former Chair of RTÉ's 20x20 Committee, Cliona has developed expertise in the interrogation of barriers within structures and implementing measures to nullify them. Cliona worked in editorial, production and operations within RTÉ Sport for close to 25 years, completing her time there as Deputy Head of TV Sport for the last 11 years (2010-2021). She worked on every Olympic Games for

the organization over the last two decades; including being team leader in Beijing and Rio. Cliona holds a BA in Media & Communications, an MSc in Sports Management and a Masters in Business Practice. Cliona is also Deputy-Chair of Ranelagh Gaels and co-lead Coach with their U10 girls team.

**Niamh Kitching (Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick) – “Play like the lady you are”: ladyball and the launch of a marketing campaign for women’s Gaelic football’**

Gaelic games are gaining prominence internationally, with the sports of hurling and Gaelic football growing in all parts of the world. Women’s Gaelic football is the largest member sport for women and girls in Ireland and its rate of growth was described at a recent governmental hearing as ‘exponential’. The increasing prominence of intercounty women’s Gaelic football has attracted corporate and commercial attention from global brands such as AIG insurance. In 2016, the Ladies Gaelic Football Association (LGFA) launched a partnership with global supermarket chain Lidl via a faux media campaign, the centre of which was a fabricated pink ball product called ‘Ladyball.’ The stunt was phase one of an ‘agitate-support’ outrage marketing campaign throughout Ireland and was accompanied by multi-platform advertisements with slogans such as “don’t break a nail, break boundaries”, and the product was described as “specially designed for a lady’s game”. The fake Ladyball campaign attracted widespread debate over social media and was even discussed in *Fortune* magazine and the *Washington Post*. While the Lidl/LGFA partnership has been somewhat unprecedented in its support for the broad participant base in women’s and girls’ Gaelic football, and while the ensuing Lidl/LGFA #SeriousSupport campaigns were more in line with Bruce’s (2016) new rules for women athlete representation, elite LGFA players still lag behind their male equivalents in the GAA in terms of government grants, media attention, and match attendance. This case study draws attention to the gendered communication and marketing strategy used to launch the LGFA/Lidl sponsorship partnership. Particular focus is given to how sports organizations choose to frame women and represent both their athletes and women’s sport, and if and how these decisions are cultivating traditional stereotypes and cultural values around sport for women and girls.

**Biographical note:**

**Niamh Kitching** is a Lecturer in Physical Education at Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick. Her research interests include the sociology of sport and PE and gender and sport. Her published research focuses on women athletes and coaches, and their participation and presentation in sports and sports media.

**Maedhbh Ní Chumhaill (NUI Galway) and Seán Crosson (NUI Galway) – “Exposing force”: the Covid-19 pandemic and media coverage of women’s sports in Ireland’**

The Covid-19 crisis has presented unprecedented challenges for sporting organizations across the world. The periods of multiple lockdowns and various restrictions across many countries globally undermined the structures that have supported sporting practices, particularly in the

arena of professional sport heavily dependent on spectator attendance, viewership, and engagement for its financing. However, the pandemic also revealed structural and ongoing issues with regard to the manner in which women's sports in particular are facilitated and promoted, including in Ireland. Una Mullally (2020) argues that the pandemic acted as an 'exposing force' that highlighted the inadequacies of health and other organisational infrastructures, services and supports in an Irish society weakened by years of neoliberal orthodoxy. It exposed shortcomings dating back decades, but that had become particularly exacerbated following the 2008 global financial crisis and the austerity measures that ensued. Here we borrow the term 'exposing force' to trace how the pandemic served to highlight neglected weaknesses and inequalities with regard to the structures and supports available to facilitate women's sport in Ireland compared to men's equivalent sports, informed by a survey conducted in the summer of 2021 with 194 female athletes across the island of Ireland. A key issue raised in responses to the survey was the ongoing imbalance in the media coverage of men's sports when compared to the coverage of female sports and the importance of media coverage to the continued growth and development of women's sports in Ireland.

### **Biographical notes:**

**Maedhbh Ní Chumhaill** studied Politics, International Relations and Sociology in UCD and the University of Oslo. She is a recent graduate of the MA in Public Advocacy and Activism from the Huston School of Film in NUI Galway where she submitted her final dissertation titled 'Irish women in sport: the pandemic effect.' Maedhbh works as an account executive at a PR and communications company.

**Seán Crosson** is leader of the Sport & Exercise Research Group, Co-Director of the MA in Sports Journalism and Communication, and Senior Lecturer in Film in the Huston School of Film & Digital Media, National University of Ireland Galway. His previous publications include the monographs *Gaelic Games on Film* (Cork University Press, 2019), and *Sport and Film* (Routledge, 2013) and the collections *Sport, Film and National Culture* (Routledge, 2021) and (as co-editor) *Sport, Representation and Evolving Identities in Europe* (Peter Lang, 2010). This paper is further to previous research undertaken with Marcus Free that examined the Irish media response to the Impact of Covid-19 on Gaelic Games, including the book chapter "'This Too Shall Pass": Gaelic Games, Irish Media, and the Covid-19 Lockdown in Ireland' [*Time Out: National Perspectives on Sport and the Covid-19 Lockdown* edited by Jörg Krieger, April Henning, Paul Dimeo, and Lindsay Parks Pieper. (Champaign, IL.: Common Ground, 2021)]

**3.30pm. – 4pm. Tea/Coffee**

**4pm. – 5.45pm. – Panel 3 – Chair: Neil O'Boyle (Dublin City University)**

**John Affleck (Penn State University) – ‘Pitching football: why are Americans paying to see their sport in Dublin?’**

American football played by university students has been an enormously popular sport in the United States since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, one that generates more than \$100 million in annual revenue for each of the highest-earning schools. Championship games routinely crack the list of top 10 U.S. broadcasts of the year. Given the sport’s popularity at home, this essay will examine why American colleges have played games in Dublin on six occasions since 1988 with two more scheduled, in 2022 (Northwestern-Nebraska) and 2023 (Navy-Notre Dame). These competitions offer an interesting case study in how an American game is being marketed as destination tourism in Ireland. Among the issues this essay will explore: practical reasons why Ireland offers an opportunity to U.S. schools; marketing of the games and the role of “Irishness” in this effort; the success of these events, including 35,000 Americans attending the 2012 Notre Dame-Navy game; and, future opportunities in a changing sports landscape. Research for the essay and subsequent presentation at NUI Galway will be drawn from contemporary journalism; interviews with key organizers of games and off-the-field events; and, my lived experience attending the 2012 Navy-Notre Dame matchup at Aviva Stadium as a Notre Dame alumnus and fan, as well as my experience leading student journalists as they covered the 2014 Penn State-Central Florida game known as the Croke Park Classic.

**Biographical note:**

**John Affleck** is the Knight Chair in Sports Journalism and Society at Penn State and director of the John Curley Center for Sports Journalism. Prior to that, he enjoyed an award-winning, 22-year career as a reporter and editor for The Associated Press, primarily in U.S. news and sports. During his tenure, Curley Center students have reported on major sporting events, from the Super Bowl to the Paralympics, and reported on societal issues through the lens of sports on class journeys to Ireland, Cuba, England, Scotland and Puerto Rico. Classes led by John also have produced two short sports documentaries, both of which have appeared at multiple film festivals.

**Connell Vaughan (Technological University Dublin) and Michael O’Hara (Technological University Dublin) – ‘The Rhetorical use of Philosophy and Style; The Reform Agenda in Irish Soccer Management’**

Following major issues of corporate governance at the FAI arising in March 2019, the Association has been on a reform journey that seeks to comply with UEFA good governance principles. Simultaneously, both the men’s and women’s senior teams appointed new managers, Stephen Kenny (April 2020), and Vera Pauw (September 2019). This paper considers the rhetorical use of philosophy and style and its relationship to both national identity and the reform agenda deployed by the new managers in media interviews and press conferences. By considering the attempts to articulate independent and sophisticated managerial philosophies in their media appearances, the FAI’s two most visible employees in the public eye have sought to position and promote Ireland as a modern global footballing nation.

A long-established trope in sporting media discourse is that the Irish (men's) soccer team "peddle" an unrefined "Neanderthal" and British derivative soccer-style. Currently, the image of Shane Duffy's head embodies this clichéd 'heart,' grit, determination, and crucially effectiveness. Nonetheless, Kenny stridently maintains in his press performances that there is a battle to understand Ireland's style, not as a decades-long devotion to "British style," but more in keeping with a "European" style. Pauw equally promotes the development of a ball-playing midfielder (such as Katie McCabe) emblematic of sophisticated style. She explicitly connects style with status, though dispelling that this is necessarily a defined Continental (or Dutch) style. The more experienced international manager, working in the less stylistically loaded context, she is explicitly more pragmatic. Emphasizing the substance of tournament qualification and presenting her primary tasks as the management of realistic expectations and the inculcation of professional standards. This paper finds both managers presenting programs of cultural reform in their media performances that have to continually negotiate the legacy and discourse that binds identity and playing style, the political and aesthetic.

### **Biographical notes:**

**Connell Vaughan** is a Lecturer in the Creative Industries and Visual Culture at the Dublin School of Creative Arts (Technological University Dublin) specialising in aesthetics and cultural policy. He is an associate researcher with the Graduate School of Creative Arts and Media (GradCAM) and a committee member of the European Society for Aesthetics.

**Michael O'Hara** is an artist and Lecturer in Fine Art and Visual Culture at Technological University Dublin. He has published work on subjects such as the philosophy of technology, the aesthetics of the post-digital and the aesthetics of football.

### **Stephen Boyd (Trinity College Dublin and Institute of Art, Design and Technology) – 'Surfáil sna scannáin: the history and cultural politics of the Irish surf film genre'**

This paper will offer a comprehensive critical history of the Irish surf film from its beginnings in the early 2000s and its representation in American surf films of the 1990s. The surf film is an unexplored area of Irish film studies that has a large subcultural local and international audience. The genre includes feature films, short narrative films, community based 'folk' films, and an emerging and successful online film culture. This has evolved to such an extent that the 'Shore Shots' 1st annual Irish Surf film festival was held in early 2013.

*Surfáil sna Scannáin* will provide a textual analysis of *Waveriders* (Conroy, Ireland, 2009) and Ross Whitakers *Between Land and Sea* (Ireland, 2016); two of the most familiar Irish surf movies. The analysis will examine these films in the wider context of both Irish and global examples of the genre; beginning with early examples such as *Eye of the Storm* (Conroy, 2002) and concluding with contemporary films such as *Keep it a Secret* (Sean Duggan, 2021).

Methodologically, the paper will examine the form of Irish surf film (narrative, documentary and commercial) in relation to the major debates within Irish film studies, and the new field of critical surf studies. The paper will interrogate how the surf film breaks from traditional discourses in art about Irish culture and identity and argues that these films should now be regarded as a distinct genre of Irish cinema. The analysis will also consider the social and

cultural impact that the films have made within Irish coastal regions and their role in defining the tourist gaze on the Wild Atlantic Way.

### **Biographical note:**

**Stephen Boyd** is a lecturer in Film and Digital Media at the Institute of Art, Design and Technology (Dun Laoghaire, Dublin) where he teaches modules in Non-Western Cinema, Popular Culture, and Global Media. He is also currently a PhD student at Trinity College Dublin. Stephen studied his MA in Film Studies at UCD and published within the field of Irish film studies before writing the first academic articles on Irish surf culture ('Surfing a Postnationalist Wave: The Role of Surfing in Irish Popular Culture' (2014) and 'No Boarders: Postnational Identity and the Surfing Subculture in Ireland' (2018). His next publication is a history of Adventure Sports in Ireland in the upcoming book *The Atlas of Irish Sport* (Cork University Press). Stephen has also been a regular film critic and commentator on Irish radio over the past 10 years. He began his PhD at the School of Creative Arts at Trinity College in March 2021 on the history and analysis of Irish surf films.

### **Friday 20<sup>th</sup> May**

#### **9.45am. – 11.30am. – Panel 4 – Chair: Michael Lang (NUI Galway)**

#### **Siobhan Doyle (Technological University Dublin and National Museum of Ireland) – 'The GAA, media and national anthem: protocols, identity and object rituals'**

The playing of the national anthem is a traditional custom at many sporting occasions and can be interpreted as a performance of a nation's symbols and heritage. As well as being a collective performance of national values, the national anthem also reaffirms individual identities through behavioural tendencies that can be observed through TV coverage. It is the use of the national anthem as a platform for the expression of identity that is the focus of this paper.

In 2021, the GAA tightened match-day regulations to encourage players to be more respectful of the national anthem. The amendment involved communicating several reminders to players ahead of the anthem being played, the insistence that hurlers remove their helmets for the duration of the anthem and referees allocating additional time between the anthem and throw-in. By using the national anthem as a framework for analysing rituals around the national anthem within a GAA context, a discussion of these regulations, their meaning and adherence and how they have affected TV coverage is presented.

This paper examines the behaviour of two inter-county GAA managers during the national anthem. Using TV footage and photography as sources, an analysis of Brian Cody and Davy Fitzgerald's observation of Amhrán na bhFiann is presented. Brian Cody's removal of his familiar baseball cap and Davy Fitzgerald's ritual of holding onto a cherished personal possession during the national anthem demonstrate how objects are used as material support for this match-day ritual. These rituals are primarily mediated through TV coverage that capture

these moments of identity performance. This paper draws from theories of material culture, sociology, nationalism and sport history to argue that objects are rich and complex sources for creating meaningful discussions around perceived protocols and performance during the national anthem.

**Biographical note:**

**Siobhán Doyle** is Assistant Lecturer in Design History at Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin) and Curatorial Researcher in the National Museum of Ireland. She completed a PhD in Museum Studies in the Graduate School of Creative Arts and Media at TU Dublin in May 2020. Siobhán's first book *A History of the GAA in 100 Objects* will be published by Merrion Press in October 2022. It is part of a multi-faceted project supported by RTÉ that will offer a new perspective on GAA history by presenting a range of objects from museums, pubs and private collections and placing them as central to a new understanding of the history of the association and its development.

**Carolyn Schmitz (Technische Universität Dortmund) – “Preserving Irishness”: The GAA between inclusivity and exclusivity’**

**“Preserving Irishness”: The GAA between Exclusivity and Inclusivity**

Since the mid-90s Ireland has seen an increasing influx of migrants due to relative economic and political stability. For many people in a country with a long history of emigration which was also seen to be largely ethnically homogeneous, the change in demographics brought about by immigration was sudden, unexpected, and unprecedented. The diversity of Irish society, as well as instances of racism and right-wing movements, have been gradually highlighted throughout the last years with the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement and more diverse voices in literature and the media. Faced with an unprecedented wave of migration sport was, and still is, heralded by the Federation of Irish Sport as an important tool for integration which enables intercultural dialogue and development. Since Ireland's largest sporting organization, the GAA, is largely based on community work its value for integrating migrants becomes instantly apparent. However, the GAA also has a long record of forced exclusivity and a focus on preserving a rigid idea of Irish culture and Irish traditions. Naturally, in an increasingly diverse Irish society the concept of Irishness is everchanging. Especially within the next decade more and more second-generation migrants will become of age and add their blended or hyphenated identities to the notion of Irishness. This development is bound to clash with the traditional concepts of Irishness the GAA was founded upon. Based on examples from Irish literature and media, this paper will explore how an organization founded in exclusivity and a rigid idea of Irishness adapts to the changing Irish society and whether it can take part in integrational structures for migrants.

**Biographical note:**

**Carolyn Schmitz** received her BA and MA degrees in English and Music at the Technische Universität Dortmund in 2015 and 2019 respectively. Since January 2020 she has been working on her doctoral thesis at the Technische Universität Dortmund on the subject of “New

Ethnicities in Ireland”. Research interests include sport and fan culture, Irish nationalism, migrant studies and critical whiteness studies.

**Marcus Free (Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick) – “New Gaels”? Immigration, Irishness and sport in recent Irish broadcasting’**

Following decades of mass emigration in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the early 21<sup>st</sup> Ireland has become a country of net immigration. In 2016 the proportion of the population of the Republic born outside the island of Ireland reached 17%. In recent years, Ireland’s public service broadcaster RTE and other Irish broadcasters and media have sought to reflect increasing demographic complexity through a range of television documentary and other factual programming. There has been a notable expansion of material directly addressing racism in Irish society in the wake of the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests that followed the murder of George Floyd in the US. The experiences of players of immigrant origin or parentage in sport have featured strongly, in turn reflecting the extensive focus on sport in media commentaries prompted by BLM protests. Examining a range of Irish television broadcasts featuring themes of migration and sport in the post-2020 BLM protest period, including documentary and current affairs, this paper explores the tensions, within them, between the interrogation of racism and its social and cultural impact, and reassuring narratives of integration into an already constituted conceptualisation of welcoming ‘Irish culture’. It situates these representations within a variety of intersecting contexts: extensive criticism of Ireland’s immigration policies, especially the ‘direct provision’ system for asylum seekers; media representations of the rapid growth of immigration since the 1990s; RTE’s policies on diversity and inclusion since the mid-2000s; and critical commentaries on, and initiatives towards inclusivity and combatting racism in Irish sport. The paper problematises the representation of Gaelic games in particular – games unique to Ireland and the Irish diaspora – as vehicles for inclusion and acceptance of difference and hybridity. It highlights a tension between their role in celebrating assimilation into ‘native’ Irish culture and a policy agenda, in Gaelic games and Irish broadcasting, focused on accommodation of diverse migrant, transnational and transcultural identities.

**Biographical note:**

**Marcus Free** is a lecturer in media and communication studies at Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick. He has taught previously at the Universities of Sunderland and Wolverhampton. He has published widely in peer-reviewed journals and scholarly collections on the interrelationships between national identity, gender and race in television, film and print media. His most recent book (co-edited with Neil O’Boyle) is *Sport, the Media and Ireland: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Cork University Press, 2020). He is guest editor of a special issue of *Television and New Media* (Volume 22(1), 2021) on contemporary Irish television.

**Daithi McMahon (University of Derby) – ‘Tuned-in for the throw-in: the Irish diaspora as transnational sports radio listeners’**



Emigration has long been a feature of Irish identity and heritage with the Irish diaspora ever-present in traditional locations such as the UK, USA and Australia, and more recently in the Middle East, Asia and Europe. One common theme amongst this geographically dispersed group is the preservation of connections with ‘home’ to keep abreast of current political, economic and cultural events back in Ireland. Sport falls into the latter category with significant sporting events offering opportunities for Irish people the world over to gather and celebrate their Irishness and cultural heritage. This paper argues that radio is an important medium for international consumption of live sports due to the advantages it holds in terms of reach (analogue and digital), depth of coverage, quality of commentary and the atmosphere created through the aural sensory experience. Listeners find this aural emprise akin to actually being at the match.

This paper looks at the consumption of live sport on the radio, particularly the GAA sports hurling and football, by the Irish diaspora and what value and meaning this ritualistic experience holds in relation to construction and/or negotiation of identity and ‘Irishness’. The consumption practice also crucially has a centripetal affect that, with the support of social media, can help form transnational online communities (McMahon 2018). Furthermore, listening to programming synchronously has sociocultural benefits since it allows individuals to have shared experiences and awareness which can help maintain relationships with friends and family back home and supports local/regional identity through connection with ones native community.

The findings are drawn from interviews with a celebrated sports broadcaster and members of the Irish diaspora in the USA and Britain who are habitual listeners of Irish sports broadcasting. The output of local radio station *Radio Kerry* and national public service broadcast station *RTÉ Radio One* will be highlighted in this paper.

### **Biographical note:**

**Daithí McMahon**, PhD, is a Senior Lecturer in Media at the University of Derby. He is an international award-winning radio playwright, director, producer and sound artist. His research interests include audience practices of participation via social media, the political economies of mass media industries and digital media convergence. He has published in numerous journals including *Interactions: Studies in Communication and Culture* and *VIEW Journal of European Television History and Culture*. McMahon’s thesis explored the impact of Facebook on the Irish Radio Industry 2011-16. He continues to explore and expand his artistic practice, most recently into documentary filmmaking, screenwriting and ambisonic audio drama.

**12.00pm. – 13.45pm. – Panel 5 – Chair: Katie Liston (University of Ulster)**

**Aoife Sheehan (Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick) and Niamh Kitching (Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick) – “That woman’s voice is so annoying”: Exploring the experiences of women sports journalists, reporters, and contributors in sports media’**

The 20x20 movement has seen an increase in the coverage of women’s sport, but sports media is still widely regarded as a male dominated space and a cursory glance in any press box in Ireland

on any sporting Sunday will back this up. The growth of women working in the sports media sector is encouraging, but they have a lot to navigate through.

The purpose of this research is to examine the experiences of women sports journalists, reporters and contributors working in sports media in Ireland and the UK. More specifically, this study will explore how women journalists navigate their careers in the heretofore male dominated space of sports media.

It will involve a series of semi-structured interviews with up to 10 women working in sports media, working both in Ireland and the UK, across TV, Radio, Print and online and it will be analysed using a thematic approach. The sample includes a woman at the beginning of her career and a woman who has worked in the area for over four decades. Initial results indicate that women in sports media must overcome a myriad of obstacles in their careers, including censoring their appearances, and using specific strategies to navigate social media.

This researcher will keep a reflexive journal and reflect throughout the process to combat and challenge any bias that I may have from working in the industry as a contributor. This work will be important to inform the public about the landscape within which women in sports media currently operate.

### **Biographical notes:**

**Aoife Sheehan** has a keen interest in GAA and is a panelist & co-commentator on Radio 1 and The Sunday Game on TV and a former Limerick camogie player. Aoife is currently completing a Masters in Adult and Further Education and is a graduate of UL with a degree in New Media and English.

**Niamh Kitching** is a Lecturer in Physical Education at Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick. Her research interests include the sociology of sport and PE and gender and sport. Her published research focuses on female athletes and coaches, and their participation and presentation in sports and sports media.

### **Conor Heffernan (University of Ulster) – ‘The Rasslin Irish: Becky Lynch, the girl from Baldoyle’**

In 2013, Irish professional wrestler Becky Lynch was signed by World Wrestling Entertainment as part of their developmental NXT brand. Over the next several years Lynch’s profile rose with the company as a sustained effort was made to promote women’s wrestling in a way never seen before. By the end of 2019, Lynch was one of the company’s largest stars and even took part in the first ever women’s Wrestlemania main event alongside Charlotte Flair and former UFC champion Ronda Rousey. Lynch is not the first Irish wrestler employed by the WWE (her contemporaries include ‘Sheamus’ and ‘Finn Balor’) but she is the first to attain truly superstar status. Nicknaming herself first as ‘The Man’ and, more recently, as ‘Big Time Becks,’ Lynch has obtained international prestige in an admittedly niche sport. The purpose of this presentation is not to evaluate Lynch’s athletic career but rather to examine her reporting in the Irish press. Although

popular in Ireland, professional wrestling operates in a strange subculture between sport and entertainment. Reporting on Lynch, whose sporting persona at times mimics that of Conor McGregor, journalists often prove reticent about discussing her sporting achievements. Instead, attention is usually placed on her Irishness, femininity and role as an entertainer. In line with reporting on other female stars in combat sports, most notably Katie Taylor, her achievements can be overlooked or mentioned in passing. What makes Lynch such an interesting case study is the over-the-top nature of professional wrestling, her egotistical role playing and aggressive ring style. Studying the construction of Lynch's Irishness in the Irish media, this presentation asks what role, if any, does the sport and the gender of the Irish athlete have in their media profile.

### **Biographical note:**

**Conor Heffernan** is Lecturer in the Sociology of Sport at Ulster University. Conor has published extensively on the history of Irish sport, fitness and health. In 2021 he published *The History of Irish Physical Culture* with Palgrave MacMillan. Conor also runs his own history of fitness website, *Physical Culture Study*.

### **Payam Ansari (Dublin City University) and Gary Sinclair (Dublin City University) – 'Factors shaping contemporary women's football fandom in Ireland'**

There is little empirical research on women's football (WF) fandom in the literature (Pfister and Pope 2018; Sveinson et al. (2019). A better understanding of WF fandom serves to meaningfully engage fans, ultimately utilising it to the benefit of the sport and its stakeholders to develop social and commercial opportunities (Maderer et al. 2019). In Ireland, and many other countries, although sport is socially, culturally, and even symbolically important (Byrne 2019), the study of sport has been a 'male preserve', and women's sports has been marginalised (Liston 2006). Among the various overlooked subjects, are factors that shape contemporary fandom, the social media consumption patterns of the WF fans, the experiences of WF stakeholders that impact fan engagement, and the absence of men in WF fandom studies. All these gaps highlight why identifying factors shaping WF fandom is important in order to reshape perceptions and achieve greater recognition in women's sport (Crawford 2004). To fill these gaps, this research aims to identify the factors shaping contemporary WF fandom in Ireland. These factors will be identified by incorporating the findings obtained from semi-structured interviews with football fans and WF stakeholders in Ireland, including FAI and clubs' officials, sponsors, media, PR and Marketing agencies, merged with field observations. A summary of the process and findings will be presented at the symposium.

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### **Biographical notes:**

**Payam Ansari** is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) postdoctoral fellow at Dublin City University. He is currently working on his MSCA project, which is about developing a fan engagement framework for Women’s Football in Ireland. He previously worked in the football industry as the Head of Marketing Department of Football Federation of Iran.

**Gary Sinclair** is an Associate Professor of Marketing, specialising in Consumer Behaviour, and head of the Subcultures Lab in the Irish Institute of Digital Business. His research focuses primarily on the contexts of music, sport, and sustainability with emphasis on the ethical and broader societal implications of such consumption practices. His work has been widely published and cited in a variety of top international peer-reviewed journals such as the *European Journal of Marketing*, the *Journal of Business Research*, the *Journal of Business Ethics* and *Marketing Theory*, as well as mainstream publications such as RTE and the Irish Times.

**Kieran O’ Leary (IPSOS), Benny Cullen (Sport Ireland - presenting), Elizabeth Loughren (Sport Ireland) and Brian Doyle (Sport Ireland) – ‘Researching the Olympic spirit’**

**Purpose:** In 2021, Sport Ireland and the Olympic federation of Ireland supported Ireland's largest ever Olympic team comprised of 116 athletes competing across 19 sports to attend the 2021 Tokyo games. Due to the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic a unique research opportunity presented itself whereby the data collection period for the 2021 Irish Sports Monitor (ISM) aligned with the delayed 2021 Olympics games in Tokyo.

The ISM asks respondents about their behaviours over the past seven days in terms of sport and physical activity. In addition, the ISM includes shorter flexi modules which focus on specific topics. The purpose of this research was to examine the Irish public's perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes to the Olympic Games in Tokyo and compare them to previously published international results.

**Method:** Between July and September of 2021, 1,053 adults aged 16+ took part in randomly selected computer assisted telephone interviews. Interviews were conducted three weeks prior, during and two weeks following the 2021 Olympic Games. Respondents were asked a series of Likert scale questions on how the Olympics influenced their motivations and inspiration to participate in sport, national pride, and togetherness. In addition, respondents' interest in the Olympics, how they view the Olympics, knowledge of athletes were also assessed.

**Conclusion:** Irish public interest in the Olympics is higher than most other countries, ranking 6<sup>th</sup> of twenty-nine countries in the run up to the Olympics. Four in five adult respondents believe the Olympics inspire tomorrow's generation to participate in sport, however only one in four adults feel the Olympics motivates them to participate in sport themselves. Overwhelmingly, nine in ten respondents felt that Irish Olympic athletes set a positive example for others to follow.

#### **Biographical note:**

**Benny Cullen** is Director of Research and Innovation at Sport Ireland where he manages a multi-disciplinary team which carries out strategic research, evaluation and innovation to inform Irish sports policy and national investment strategies. Benny and his team do large amounts of formative research work which underpins the development of solutions to the challenges sports policy seeks to address. His teamwork in close collaboration with the other Sport Ireland Units, the National Governing Bodies of Sport, the Local Sports Partnerships and the third level institutions of Ireland. When not doing research, Benny loves being active in the outdoors with family and friends. At weekends you'll most likely find him on a mountain either kayaking with friends, hiking with family or mountain biking with his wife and young son.