

## Playing the Trump card: Glorifying Aotearoa New Zealand feminism in ‘dangerous times’

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SALLY CRAWFORD

### Abstract

The Women’s March took place globally on 21 to 22 January, 2017. It was organised by a collective of women from around the world advocating for women’s rights and allied social justice concerns, and was catalysed by Donald Trump’s inauguration and administration. Aotearoa New Zealand joined in this global event, holding marches across many different regions in support of the main Women’s March in Washington, United States. However, despite these global outcries of solidarity, the march lacked an intersectional approach in its feminist goals. This article summarises research from the author’s Honours dissertation, carried out at the University of Auckland, where the author used the Women’s March protests throughout Aotearoa New Zealand to explore how feminism is currently articulated in this country. They investigated this question over a period of 12 weeks through discourse analysis of mainstream Aotearoa New Zealand newspaper articles. Two of the notable findings from the data are discussed in this article. Firstly, New Zealanders have a tendency to heroise themselves in terms of achieving women’s rights and freedoms. Second, issues of inclusion and intersectionality were highlighted through the discourse analysis. While Aotearoa New Zealand feminism has tried to be inclusionary in its approach and is presented by feminists as a ‘diverse’ movement, it still fails to take an intersectional approach. In contrast to the popularised notion of Aotearoa New Zealand feminism as world-leading, the author argues that feminism still has a long way to go in this country.

### Key words

*Feminism, Aotearoa New Zealand, Women’s March, intersectionality, feminist political geography, geopolitics*

### Introduction

For some, the Women’s March was an epiphany, a political awakening, a wondrous expression of interwoven resistance and solidarity. Yet in the days before and immediately after the march, criticism arising from feminist activists, bloggers, and scholars about the way in which intersectionality and inclusion were taken up by organisers, protesters, and marchers eclipsed the glow of solidarity experienced by many participants (Moss & Maddrell, 2017, p. 614).

The Women’s March took place globally on 21 to 22 January, 2017. It was organised by a collective of women around the world advocating for women’s rights and allied social justice concerns, and was catalysed by Donald Trump’s inauguration and administration. As noted by Moss and Maddrell (2017) above, the Women’s March was a ‘wonderous expression of interwoven resistance and solidarity’. Aotearoa New Zealand joined in this global event, holding marches across many different regions in support of the main Women’s March in Washington, United States. Such solidarity should be fostered, as women’s oppression can unite women in a common struggle across geographic boundaries.

However, despite these global ‘expressions’ of solidarity, some feminist activists and scholars highlighted that the march lacked an intersectional approach in its feminist goals (Moss & Maddrell, 2017). In ‘dangerous times’, it is important to study the articulation of

feminism in our own communities to ensure that all members are included and empowered. This article summarises research from my Honour’s dissertation, carried out at the University of Auckland, where I used the Women’s March protests throughout Aotearoa New Zealand to explore how feminism is currently articulated in this country. I investigated this question over a period of 12 weeks through discourse analysis of mainstream Aotearoa New Zealand newspaper articles. My findings were that, first, New Zealanders have a tendency to heroise themselves in terms of achieving women’s rights and freedoms. Second, issues of inclusion and intersectionality, as discussed by Moss and Maddrell (2017), were highlighted through my discourse analysis. While Aotearoa New Zealand feminism has attempted to be inclusionary and is presented by feminists as a ‘diverse’ movement, it still fails to take an intersectional approach. In contrast to the popularised notion of Aotearoa New Zealand feminism as world-leading, I argue that feminism still has a long way to go in this country.

## **Literature review**

This literature review lays out the theoretical foundation of my research. First, I outline the contribution made by feminist political geography on issues pertaining to power, politics, and knowledge. I then discuss the way that ideologies of nationalism and feminism can be intertwined, and the advantages and drawbacks of this interlink. I also discuss the drawbacks of first- and second-wave feminism, particularly in the New Zealand context. Lastly, I consider the theory of intersectionality, which emerged out of third-wave feminism and, as I argue, better ensures the inclusion of diverse backgrounds in feminist discourse. I will later draw on key points from this literature review to argue that feminism in Aotearoa New Zealand and the United States, while both seemingly separate spaces and scales (defined below), are interconnected by a lack of intersectionality and the subsequent exclusion of certain groups.

### **Feminist political geography**

In this article, I draw on theories put forward in feminist political geography to argue that seemingly distinct places and socially constructed scales (including ‘local’, ‘national’, and ‘global’) are connected by wider power structures and processes of inequality and privilege. The meaning of the term ‘scale’ is contested in political geography but I follow Howitt’s definition, which frames it as ‘a concept made real by building up an understanding of complex and dynamic relationships and processes in context’ (Howitt, 2003, p. 151).

Feminist political geography was developed by feminist geographers to fill in the theoretical gaps identified within political geography research. Political geography is a field that has historically concentrated on the role of power and political borders (Agnew, Mitchell, & Toal, 2003). It explores how barriers, whether literal or lawful, are put up and torn down over time, and how governing powers rise and consequently fall (Agnew et al., 2003). Feminist theory incorporates a more gendered lens of scale, power, and politics into political geography research, enabling it to better include women’s voices as the subject of research in the academic domain (Agnew et al., 2003; McDowell, 1998).

Apart from including women’s voices in academia, feminist political geography has three theoretical contributions. First, it recognises a more inclusive definition of power and politics. Second, it highlights the interrelation of knowledge and power. Lastly, it draws attention to the interconnectivity of different scales through wider structures of power. In the rest of this section, I will unpack these three key contributions.

## A Power and politics

Feminist political geography builds upon traditional approaches to the discipline by reconceptualising politics and power. Feminist political geographers redefine what the discipline of political geography has traditionally considered to be politics. Politics is not just about more formal state activities; it also includes ‘little p’ politics, such as grassroots movements started by women, or ‘banal’ politics involving everyday practices that are nevertheless political (Kofman, 2005; Staeheli & Kofman, 2004; Williams & Massaro, 2013), such as a woman’s decision whether or not to wear makeup (Billig, 1995, cited in Staeheli & Kofman, 2004, p. 94). Feminist political geographers revoke the notion that certain spaces and issues are either political or apolitical, but argue instead that the private is also political (England, 2003; Lister, 2005; Sharp, 2008; Williams & Massaro, 2013). Thus, feminist political geographers aim to reconceptualise the masculinist, elitist framework of traditional political geography, especially its definition of ‘politics’.

Feminist political geography also redefines power. For example, the subfield of feminist geopolitics studies politics occurring in localised contexts and interconnecting across scales (Hyndman, 2004); it questions the dominant positions formerly understood by political geographers to be held by the state (Agnew et al., 2003; Jones & Sage, 2010; Luke, 2008). Postmodern geopolitics, another subfield of feminist political geography, similarly identifies changeable flows and borders rather than static state territories, calling into question ‘the meaning and purpose of nation-states, fixed territoriality, common governance, and scientific-technological progress within a stable international order’ (Luke, 2008, p. 221). Thus, feminist political geographers understand power as multidimensional and relational, focusing more on relationships of power rather than the distribution of power (Staeheli & Kofman, 2004). They argue that power does not belong to one homogenous group; rather, people hold differing levels of power depending on their context and the relations within that context. Feminist political geographers also redefine what political power is considered to be, identifying its presence in formal institutions such as the state, but also recognising the more mundane practices and relationships that sustain, but also destabilise, power (Agnew et al., 2003; England, 2003; Hyndman, 2004; Martin, 2004; Staeheli & Kofman, 2004). This redefinition of political powers also draws attention away from elite, often male, actors within state powers, and focuses instead on the processes by which different political subjects are produced, and their differing capacity to take action (Sharp, 2007; Staeheli & Kofman, 2004). Feminist political geography is therefore a useful theory to foster an understanding of gendered power that is more inclusive of women’s experiences.

## B Knowledge and power

Feminist political geographers claim that knowledge and positions of power are significantly interrelated because knowledge produces power. Discourses are forms of knowledge and language that hold significant power because they construct identities and create people’s understanding of the world (Sharp, 2008). These dominant codes of knowledge have led to the oppression of less dominant types of knowledge, as well as a loss of women’s voices in politics (Sharp, 2008). Feminist political geographers therefore argue that it is important to constantly challenge where knowledge is coming from, and for whose benefit, because knowledge has such a significant effect on people’s lives (Sharp, 2008). For example, as a hegemonic relationship of power, patriarchy cannot be separated from the dominant codes of knowledge that it produces (Foucault, 1980, cited in Sharp, 2008, p. 59). Patriarchal knowledge

is formed through excluding all categories of what is defined as Other, and thus the category of ‘woman’ as Other inevitably conceptualises ‘man’ as dominant (Sharp, 2008). This means that all characteristics linked within the discourse to the category ‘woman’ (such as nature, irrationality, and bodies) are demonised and undervalued (Sharp, 2008). Feminist political geography thus stresses that power cannot be understood without looking at knowledge.

### C Scales of power

Feminist geopolitics in particular has been useful for understanding how hegemonic (male) power relations impact different scales that remain underexplored in traditional geopolitics. Overall, feminist geopolitics attaches seemingly distinct issues and events across different places at different scales (e.g. local, national, global) to show how these issues and events are connected by power structures and are the result of inequality and oppression (Massaro & Williams, 2013). Feminist geopolitical theorists highlight the importance of the everyday, considering how both banal and radical political acts carried out at both international and national scales impact everyday life (England, 2003; Kofman, 2005; Massaro & Williams, 2013; Williams & Massaro, 2013). Feminist (and queer) scholars have also highlighted the importance of looking at the scale of the body (Johnston, 2016), considering embodied forms of politics as well as more traditional (national, state, global) scales (Bartos, 2018a; Bartos, 2018b; Hyndman, 2004; Massaro & Williams, 2013). By demonstrating the smaller scales and the political significance of everyday acts, they further emphasise that different scales – from the body to the global – are not distinct or separate, but are connected by the same processes (Sharp, 2007). The interconnectivity of different scales highlights the importance of looking beyond the scale of the state in order to understand politics (England, 2003).

In the next section of this literature review, I explore how feminism in Aotearoa New Zealand has been interwoven with nationalism to create a distinct national feminist identity.

### Feminised nationalism

In some countries, feminist movements have purposefully intertwined feminism with nationalism in an attempt to normalise feminism. Nationalism, according to Anderson, is fostered by the notion of the ‘imagined community’ (1991, cited in Gruffudd, 2014, p. 558). It is understood by nationalist groups and within wider societal rhetoric as a form of ‘deep horizontal comradeship’ between citizens who are bound together by the shared history of a geographic location (Agnew, 2004, p. 225). This comradeship is fostered to the point where people see their fate or identity tied to the idea of the imagined nation, despite the fact that they have never met most of their fellow citizens (Agnew, 2004; Anderson, 1991, cited in Gruffudd, 2014, p. 558).

Researchers have noted multiple accounts of feminist groups in different countries purposefully intertwining feminism with nationalism to further their feminist agenda (Erickson & Faria, 2011; Faria, 2010; Nelson, 2001). For, if feminism becomes part of the imagined community, it can be normalised and more readily accepted (Nelson, 2001). Nationalist rhetoric has been used particularly by some feminists of colour to distinguish themselves from dominant white feminism, but also to make feminism more accessible to men (Nelson, 2001). By constructing women’s issues as a ‘national’ problem, taking action on these issues is everyone’s (including men’s) responsibility rather than just women’s (Nelson, 2001). Researchers such as Erickson and Faria (2011), Faria (2010), and Nelson (2001) have thus highlighted some of the benefits of using nationalist rhetoric to further feminist goals.

However, the incorporation of nationalism into feminism is not always without conflict. Despite the efforts of some feminists to unite women under one nationalist identity, this process can obstruct the recognition of difference between women from diverse backgrounds and can ultimately exclude some women from their uniting efforts (Batinic, 2001; Erickson & Faria, 2011; Jacoby, 1999). In the first wave of feminism in Aotearoa New Zealand, for example, suffragettes were primarily concerned with gaining the right to vote for white and middle class women. Some scholars have argued that these early ‘heroes’ of first-wave feminism in Aotearoa were underpinned by strong exclusionary principles that pitted white Pākehā women against indigenous Māori women. Racist or anti-immigrant claims were sometimes made to argue on behalf of women’s suffrage (Epstein, 2002; Dalziel, 1994; Orange, 1993, cited in Schuster, 2014, p. 21). For example, Wanhalla (2001) and Glazebrook (2009) have noted that Kate Sheppard, an influential Pākehā women within the feminist and suffrage movements during the late nineteenth century, appears to have supported white perfection of the nation through eugenics, and openly advocated for its implementation. While Sheppard held some progressive perspectives on women’s rights, she was, as Glazebrook puts it, ‘a woman of her times in that she held beliefs that may be regarded as problematical in today’s society’ (2009, p. 2). Sheppard was a founding member of the New Zealand Women’s Christian Temperance Union (and its national superintendent in 1887), which openly advocated for the eugenics movement (Glazebrook, 2009). She also edited ‘The White Ribbon’, a publication that produced articles in support of eugenics (Stace, 1998, cited in Glazebrook, 2009, p. 2). In the 1919 National Council of Women annual conference report, Sheppard suggested the government needed to support children who were ‘well and healthily born, well-nourished and well educated’, rhetoric that echoed ideologies of white perfection articulated by the eugenics movement (National Council of Women annual conference report, 1919, p. 9, quoted in Wanhalla, 2001, p. 2). Therefore, while Sheppard advocated for the advancement of women, her feminist principles were intertwined with nationalist discourses that primarily supported the advancement of white women (Schuster, 2014).

This practice of exclusion also continued to shape Aotearoa New Zealand’s second wave of feminism that developed in the 1970s. Second-wave feminism fostered a universalised notion of ‘sisterhood’, which was intended to unite all women under the same experience of patriarchal oppression (Archer Mann & Huffman, 2005; Nelson & Seager, 2005; Pinterics, 2001; Schuster, 2014). Yet, as some scholars have noted, the concept of sisterhood also highlights the reluctance of second-wave feminists to acknowledge differences *between* women (Nelson & Seager, 2005; Schuster, 2014). This became particularly apparent in New Zealand during the 1978 Women’s Liberation Conference held at Piha (Schuster, 2014), where concerns were raised about the direction the Women’s Liberation movement was taking (Rogers, 1978). Some of the women present argued that the movement was prioritising a white, middle-class, Pākehā woman’s perspective, while simultaneously excluding groups of women already socially disadvantaged in Aotearoa New Zealand, particularly Māori, lesbian, and working-class women (Rogers, 1978; Schuster, 2014; Nelson & Seager, 2005). Thus, while feminism may be fostered when situated in a national framework, it may nevertheless serve to sustain the exclusion of already-marginalised groups of women within that nation. The next section therefore focuses on intersectionality, a feminist theory that highlights and challenges such exclusionary practices within feminist and academic discourse.

## An intersectional feminism

Intersectionality is an important theory to emerge during third-wave feminism (Archer Mann & Huffman, 2005; Coleman, 2009). This theory was developed by black feminist scholars such as Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), bell hooks (1983), Angela Davis (1981), and Audre Lorde (1984), who sought to highlight the homogenised, assumed whiteness of women’s identity that they perceived within second-wave feminist discourse (Lister, 2005). They argued that, as a result of this discourse, some women were excluded from feminist consideration on account of their race and ethnicity, as well as their sexuality, ability, and class; white feminists consequently held a privileged position in the feminist movement to shape and direct feminist debate (Lister, 2005). Black feminist scholars, such as hooks (1983) and Davis (1981), thus drew on the theory of intersectionality to argue that inequalities based on a person’s intersecting identities (including their race, gender, sexuality, ability, and class) must all be included as core feminist issues (Smith, 1980, cited in Harnois, 2012, p. 824).

Intersectionality highlights how people may embody multiple overlapping social identities, or subject positions, which act as sources of oppression (Locke, 2015); these identities are built within a ‘matrix of domination’ (Collins, 2000, cited in Rahman, 2010, p. 948), where they merge and overlap (Choo & Ferree, 2010; Lister, 2005; Rahman, 2010). When an individual has multiple identities that act as sources of social oppression (such as being black, queer, or experiencing economic precarity), each element of their subject position is not additive, but multiplicative (Lister, 2005). In other words, the various elements of their identity intersect to create and sustain multiple and interrelated forms of oppression.

The theory of intersectionality also highlights that feminist movements need to take into account women’s differing subject positions and bring these to the forefront of political debate (Rahman, 2010). Putting intersectionality into practice emphasises the multiple oppressed groups that have previously been left out of earlier feminist research and social movements (Choo & Ferree, 2010; Collins, 2000, cited in Rahman, 2010, p. 948). Intersectionality is therefore crucial to a successful feminist movement (in Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond) if it wishes to avoid repeating past mistakes of privileging white feminism and silencing already marginalised communities and perspectives.

In the next section of this article, I outline the methods I used to ascertain the articulation of feminism in Aotearoa New Zealand, and to understand the extent to which feminism in this country is inclusionary.

## Methodology

The research laid out in this article is based on my Geography Honours project (completed in 2017 at the University of Auckland). I conducted a discourse analysis using popular newspaper articles published in Aotearoa New Zealand to investigate the ways that feminism was articulated through national solidarity marches with the 2017 Women’s March on Washington. This was to ascertain mainstream public sentiment about feminism from six months prior to the Women’s March up until mid-October 2017. I drew upon a range of mainstream national and local newspapers; the full list can be seen below in Figure 1. I found relevant articles by using the keywords ‘feminism’, ‘women’s march’, ‘women’s’, and ‘march’ in the Newztext search engine, an online tool that searches for keywords in articles across a wide range of Aotearoa New Zealand newspapers. Articles were considered relevant if at least one substantial piece of information or quote was related to the solidarity women’s marches.

I used Aotearoa New Zealand as my context, and news media (both print and online) as my source for several reasons. First, Aotearoa New Zealand has a rich recorded history of the first, second, and third waves of feminism; I was therefore interested to compare these with more contemporary articulations of New Zealand feminism. Second, feminism is not a homogenous theory or movement, and I wanted to situate my analysis within a specific local context, especially a context that (as I indicated above) has glorified its own feminist history. Third, I used news articles as my media sources because they typically exemplify mainstream public opinion on national and international topics; mainstream media will typically publish articles about issues they think readers will be interested in. I chose newspapers and news sites in particular because they are a popular form of media and are relatively easy for both the public and the researcher to access.

**Figure 1 Summary of newspaper articles**

Newspapers	Main location of readership	Keywords					
		'Women's march'		'Feminism'		Other ('women's' or 'march')	
		Total articles	Relevant articles	Total articles	Relevant articles	Total articles	Relevant articles
New Zealand Herald	National	9	6	23	13	1	1
NZ Herald Saturday	National	3	3	11	10	0	0
Stuff.co.nz	National	1	1	3	2	0	0
Scoop	National	5	5	25	11	6	6
The Dominion Post	Wellington	7	5	29	13	5	5
Waikato Times	Waikato	0	0	18	9	0	0
Southland Times	Southland	5	2	15	1	2	2
Northern Advocate	Northland	2	2	9	4	1	1
Bay of Plenty Times	Bay of Plenty	2	0	8	1	1	1
Manawatu Standard	Manawatu	8	3	15	5	1	1
Nelson Mail	Nelson	1	0	11	2	4	1
Taranaki Daily News	Taranaki	4	0	11	1	0	0
Wanganui Chronicle	Wanganui	2	0	4	1	0	0
Daily Post	Rotorua	1	0	8	2	1	0
Sunday Star Times	National	5	4	14	9	1	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>55</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>19</b>

I undertook discourse analysis to evaluate the qualitative data I gathered from my media sources. Discourse analysis exposes power relations embedded within texts that shape people's thoughts and actions and have material consequences (Waitt, 2005). I used Waitt's (2005) checklist for doing discourse analysis (Figure 2). Waitt (2005) brought together ideas from Fairclough (2003), Rose (2001), and Tonkiss (1998) to generate a coherent list of questions that discourse analysts can draw upon. These questions encourage the analyst to examine how different discourses are drawn together, the persuasion methods used to convince the reader of their argument, and who is (and is not) represented in the text. Waitt (2005) argues that while this checklist is inherently selective in the questions asked of a text, it nevertheless encourages critical analysis of contemporary moral and political issues.

**Figure 2. Waitt's discourse analysis of texts (2005, p. 187). Adapted from Fairclough (2003), Rose (2001), and Tonkiss (1998).**

Steps	Questions to consider
Assumptions	What pre-existing categories or value assumptions are made?
Coding	What discourses are drawn upon in the text?
	How are discourses textured together?
	Is there a mixing of discourses?
Coherence	Are there any incoherencies in relationship to previous research?
	Are there any incoherencies in the analysis itself?
Persuasion	What types of statements are there (fact, predictions, hypothetical, evaluations)?
	How are the statements communicated (orally, encyclopaedia, maps, photographs, statistics)?
Inclusions/Silences	What elements of represented social events are included or excluded?
	Which people are represented and how?
Focus on details	What is/are the genre(s) of the text?
	Is the text part of a series or texts?
	What other texts are included/excluded?
	Whose voices are included/excluded?
	Are voices directly reported (quoted), or indirectly reported?
Focus on social contexts	What social event or chain of events is the text a part of?
	Within what social network are the events framed?
	Who is the audience of the text?

## Discussion

There were a collection of themes that emerged out of my discourse analysis of mainstream newspaper articles, three of which will be discussed below. The first theme I discuss is the reproaching of the United States and President Donald Trump in order to 'heroise' feminism in Aotearoa New Zealand. The second theme centres on Aotearoa New Zealand feminism being presented as unique and progressive through a constant reiteration of Kate Sheppard's legacy. I argue that such representations of Aotearoa New Zealand feminism foster the domination of a white, heterosexual, middle class perspective, excluding other women's voices. The final theme I explore is the marked rarity of intersectional, third-wave feminist discourse in the Aotearoa New Zealand press.

## Feminised nationalism – the reproaching of America

One significant discourse that emerged from the newspaper articles was the reproaching of the United States and Donald Trump, and the consequent ‘heroisation’ of Aotearoa New Zealand feminism. Many articles suggested that while other nations were incredibly oppressive towards women, people in Aotearoa New Zealand believe that they have risen above gender inequality; this was particularly prevalent at the time of, and just after, the Women’s March. A number of articles reproached Trump, largely due to the comments he had made throughout the election period and some of the policies he put through in his first days in office, particularly those pertaining to women (Marvelly, 2017; McLaughlin, 2017; Owen, 2017; Russell, 2016; Stein, 2017). Trump was portrayed in the articles as symbolising all that was bad about the United States, and, in relation to this research, all that was bad for women (Russell, 2016). He was also regarded as a potential threat to women in Aotearoa New Zealand through his influence on global policy and thought, and thus became someone that the country ought to fight against; as journalist Lizzy Marvely asserted, ‘the resistance has just begun’ (2017).

The ways that the US president is reproached in these articles both explicitly and implicitly constructs Aotearoa New Zealand as having a perfect, unwavering feminist consciousness. Some articles explicitly affirm what they think is an admirable presence and influence of feminism in Aotearoa New Zealand in contrast to the United States. However, most of this affirmation is implicit – and this is the real power of discourse; by presenting the United States as unfeminist and oppressive towards women, Aotearoa New Zealand is inferred to be the opposite. Some of the articles imply that Aotearoa New Zealand embraces gender equality, at least to the extent that there is little feminist work left to be done, and the country has fulfilled its feminist goals (‘A democratic disservice’, 2017; Atherton, 2017; Flahive, 2017). In one article that discussed expat women’s perspectives at the march in Wellington, an American woman living in Wellington stated that she ‘felt guilty’ for enjoying ‘New Zealand and all its diversity’ while her family in the United States was ‘still there, living through it’ (Flahive, 2017). Here, the United States is presented as an environment where people are ‘living through’ severe forms of prejudice, whereas Aotearoa New Zealand is a ‘diverse’ nation with a strong national culture of feminism and inclusivity. Whether this linkage between feminism and nationalism is done consciously or unconsciously, it sets up a stark contrast between Aotearoa New Zealand and the United States; by denigrating the United States, Aotearoa New Zealand is simultaneously praised for its gender equality and diversity. Moreover, as Nelson (2001) argues, when feminism becomes part of the imagined community, it is more likely to be normalised and readily accepted. This process of normalising feminism through nationalism is apparent in the discourses of these newspaper articles, where the writers and people interviewed assume that gender equality is a goal shared by the entire nation (Atherton, 2017; Flahive, 2017; Owen, 2016).

Trump was also specifically reproached in the newspaper articles I examined; the sexism he displayed throughout his campaign was constructed as a threat to any further progression of women’s rights in Aotearoa New Zealand. Some people expressed concern that the negativity towards feminism and women’s issues displayed in Trump’s campaign would find its way into Aotearoa New Zealand. This is exemplified in Deborah Russell’s comments:

Trump has promised to restrict abortion and to appoint conservative judges to the Supreme Court. He has also said he will defund Planned Parenthood, and remove contraception from health care plans ... [I]ncreases in pro-life or anti-abortion rhetoric in the United States may be reflected in increased pressure on our politicians here, and less appetite to reform our badly outdated abortion law (Russell, 2016).

Here, Russell expresses concern that Trump’s anti-abortion rhetoric may filter into Aotearoa New Zealand and prohibit any changes to the nation’s current abortion laws. Yet such concerns fail to recognise that anti-abortion rhetoric already exists in Aotearoa New Zealand and contributes to the country’s ‘badly outdated’ abortion laws (Round up: Law and policy, 2011; Sparrow, 2013). Negativity surrounding women’s rights, particularly around abortion, is portrayed as filtering into Aotearoa New Zealand via the international scale, rather than being produced in this country. However, as feminist political geographers have highlighted, while (gendered) issues happening at different scales may seem distinct from each other, they are interwoven under similar structures of oppression and privilege (England, 2003; Kofman, 2005; Massaro & Williams, 2013; Sharp, 2007; Williams & Massaro, 2013). Negativity surrounding women’s rights is not just filtering down to Aotearoa New Zealand from the United States. Similar issues and events across different places and scales are connected by the same power structures (Massaro & Williams, 2013). To understand the general discourses pertaining to abortion, we need to also understand the underlying structure of patriarchy, from which both the United States and Aotearoa New Zealand are produced (Foucault, 1980, cited in Sharp, 2008, p. 59). In other words, the lack of appetite to reform abortion laws in Aotearoa New Zealand is not caused solely by events happening in the United States. The lens of feminist geopolitics highlights that sexism expressed in the United States and Aotearoa New Zealand are produced under the same structures of institutionalised patriarchy, which remain present and dominant within both nations’ social and political systems.

### **The ‘uniqueness’ of New Zealand feminism**

Within the news articles I examined, Aotearoa New Zealand feminism is implicitly constructed as a unique, world-leading form of feminism through the constant allusions to Kate Sheppard and her role in securing women’s suffrage (Owen, 2017; ‘New Zealand – first’, 2017; ‘Wellington locals to kick-off’, 2017). These articles construct Aotearoa New Zealand as unique and special because it was the first country to give women the vote (‘Dunedin rally in support’, 2017; ‘Love trumps hate’, 2017; McDonald, 2017; ‘New Zealand – first’, 2017). As one article notes, ‘Where better to begin the massive Women’s March Global movement than in the country to first give women the vote?’ (‘New Zealand – first’, 2017). Or as a spokesperson at a Dunedin rally argued, ‘New Zealand has a proud history of being in the vanguard of social justice legislation that has improved the lives of many. We were after all, the first country in the world where women successfully campaigned for the vote’ (‘Dunedin rally in support’, 2017).

The continual references in the media to Aotearoa New Zealand being the ‘first’ country to give women the vote insinuates not only that the nation is a global leader in feminism, but that this long history of feminism has cultured a strand of feminist identity that is distinct from most or all other national feminisms (Duff, 2016; ‘Dunedin rally in support’, 2017; ‘Love trumps hate’, 2017; McDonald, 2017; ‘New Zealand – first’, 2017). The country’s feminist movement was first led by Kate Sheppard, who is not only upheld as a feminist icon, but also as a national icon – a powerful symbol of Aotearoa New Zealand’s own unique brand of feminism (‘Love trumps hate’, 2017; McDonald, 2017; ‘New Zealand – first’, 2017). The continual emphasis on New Zealand being ‘the first’ in the race towards women’s suffrage and being ‘the vanguard of social justice legislation’ implies that New Zealand’s feminism is unique in this manner – it has been embedded throughout the nation’s history, and is world leading.

However, there are two problems with this reiteration of Kate Sheppard as a symbol of Aotearoa New Zealand’s unique brand of feminism. First, it wrongly portrays Sheppard as an advocate for all the nation’s women. Second, it supports the continued dominance of white

culture in Aotearoa New Zealand feminism. Both of these problems are demonstrated in the following quote from a newspaper interview with Esther Stephens, the New Zealand actress playing the role of Kate Sheppard in a theatre production: ‘One of the important principles of feminism is the right of women to have autonomy over their own bodies ... I absolutely think that she [Kate] would support a woman’s right to control what happens to her own body’ (McDonald, 2017).

First, this quote appears to illustrate Stephens’s belief that Kate Sheppard should be used as a yardstick for Aotearoa New Zealand feminism. However, consistently (and solely) using Sheppard in this way does not recognise efforts made by other women of different backgrounds who have made a significant contribution to feminism in this country. Meri Mangakahia, for example, was a Māori woman who campaigned on behalf of Māori women’s suffrage and their right to stand as members of Kotahitanga, the Māori Parliament; she therefore took a step further than the Pākehā suffrage movement (Rei, 1993). Sheppard’s elevation at the expense of women such as Mangakahia demonstrates the problems raised by scholars about intertwining feminism and nationalism (Batinic, 2001; Erickson & Faria, 2011; Jacoby, 1999). Solely focusing on Sheppard obstructs any recognition of differing feminist perspectives or actions, particularly those enacted by women whose intersecting identities render them vulnerable to marginalisation and oppression. Furthermore, consistently using Sheppard as a symbol of Aotearoa New Zealand feminism indicates that white, heterosexual, middle-class women’s perspectives not only dominated first-wave feminism in this country (Epstein, 2002; Dalziel, 1994; Orange, 1993, cited in Schuster, 2014, p. 21) but also carried on through the second wave (Nelson & Seager, 2005; Schuster, 2014), and continue to persist today. As Lister (2005) argues, white feminists continue to hold a privileged position in the feminist movement because they have the ability to articulate and guide feminist debate. Stephens’s quote above reflects the failure to include or even recognise a more intersectional approach to feminism, where diverse perspectives from different subject positions are supported (Rahman, 2010).

The second problem with using Kate Sheppard as the yardstick for Aotearoa New Zealand feminism is that it wrongly associates Sheppard with the key feminist assertion that *all* women ought to have control over their own bodies. Stephens’s claim that Sheppard would support a woman’s right to control what happens to her own body does not stand up under closer inspection. As mentioned in the literature review, Sheppard advocated for the eugenics movement in Aotearoa New Zealand (Glazebrook, 2009; Wanalla, 2001, p. 8). Eugenics by its very definition is in direct opposition to allowing women to have control over their own bodies. Kate Sheppard has been accused of being a considerable supporter of using eugenics particularly on Māori women, holding a ‘feminist-eugenic desire for white perfection’ (Wanalla, 2001, p. 8; also Glazebrook, 2009). Hence, while she is consistently held up as embodying Aotearoa New Zealand feminism, her views did not adequately represent and support all women. This reiteration of Sheppard in the media as the bastion of the nation’s feminist advancement indicates that mainstream feminism in Aotearoa New Zealand still continues to be embedded in white culture.

### **The rarity of third-wave feminism**

My analysis of mainstream newspaper articles uncovered that there was a significant lack of intersectionality in Aotearoa New Zealand feminist consciousness. While these articles suggested there were some hints of intersectionality in Aotearoa New Zealand feminism, its presence was not substantial. For example, the majority of articles discussing the Women’s March implied a more tokenistic appreciation of difference. Articles lauded the diversity seen

at the movement, and suggested the march recognised the troubles faced not just by women, but by other oppressed groups such as the LGBTQI+ community, people of colour, and immigrants ('New Zealand to kick', 2017; 'New Zealand – first', 2017; Stein, 2017). However, while diversity was mentioned as an important value for the march, the focus was more about the representation or inclusion of diverse groups rather than the active involvement of people with intersecting identities in the structure and goals of the march (and in related events since). This is seen in the following quote from an article in the online news site *Scoop*: 'The Marches are bringing together people of all backgrounds, races, religions, gender identities, ages and abilities, as well as communities of immigrants. While led by women, all are welcome to attend the marches' ('New Zealand – first', 2017).

There are two issues with this quote. First, its rhetoric about the importance of diversity was not reflected in the actions and issues that were presented in the articles that appeared in other newspapers either before or after the March; instead, a white feminist perspective continued to dominate the news (e.g. see Marvely, 2017; Owen, 2016). The claim of diversity in Aotearoa New Zealand's march did not therefore represent wider feminist actions or thoughts in this country, and suggests a tokenistic approach to including a range of voices and perspectives in Aotearoa New Zealand feminism. Second, the manner in which group differences are listed in this quote ('races, religions, gender identities') does not appear to recognise how various oppressions intersect within the matrix of domination; rather, disadvantage is presented as something embedded in static groups, rather than having a multiplicative effect (Collins, 2000, cited in Rahman, 2010, p. 948). Listing group differences in this manner does not explicitly recognise that subject positions are made at the overlap of different identities (Choo & Ferree, 2010; Lister, 2005; Rahman, 2010). As Rahman (2010) argues, a feminist movement needs to be intersectional to ensure that it supports diverse subject positions. While there was a discourse of diversity in some of the articles, it was often tokenistic and lacked an intersectional understanding of oppression and identity.

There have been media reports about instances of intersectional feminism in Aotearoa New Zealand since the Women's March; however, these have been incredibly rare. For example, two articles discussed the work of Shakti Community Council, a non-profit organisation that aims to help migrant and refugee women ("Break Free" Handbook', 2017; 'Migrant women say', 2017). Shakti hosted an event for International Women's Day 2017 called 'No Equality Without Diversity' ('Migrant women say', 2017). The event aimed to take action on the diverse issues that women in Aotearoa and other countries face, focusing especially on migrant and refugee women ('Migrant women say', 2017). This is an example of intersectionality, because the focus is not on 'women' and 'refugees' and 'migrants' but 'migrant and refugee women', thereby acknowledging that subject positions are made at the overlap of different social identities (Choo & Ferree, 2010; Lister, 2005; Rahman, 2010). Shakti recognise that this group of women have issues and experiences that are distinct from other groups of women, such as forced marriage and 'honour-based' violence ("Break Free" Handbook', 2017). This demonstrates a challenge to the discourse of Aotearoa New Zealand's homogenised feminism; Shakti recognise that these women have multiple disadvantaged identities, and that their issues are not additive, but multiplicative (Lister, 2005). This intersectional approach to feminism, however, is rarely evoked elsewhere in the nation's press and media.

## Conclusion

In ‘dangerous times’, it is important to study the articulation of feminism in our own communities. This article was a summary of my Honours dissertation, where I explored the Women’s March protests throughout Aotearoa New Zealand in order to understand the nation’s current articulation of feminism. My findings show that there seems to be a major link between the articulation of feminism and nationalism. This was exemplified through the ways that America was reproached and held up in contrast to heroic New Zealand(ers) regarding women’s rights achievements. Feminism in Aotearoa New Zealand was also constructed as being unique and world-leading, as personified through the consistent references to Kate Sheppard and the women’s suffrage movement. Pākehā Kate Sheppard is consistently upheld as the pinnacle of Aotearoa New Zealand feminism, when in reality, she did not adequately represent or advocate for all women. My research suggests that Aotearoa New Zealand feminism today still continues to be dominated by a heterosexual, middle class, and particularly white perspective, such as it was during the second and third waves. While there were some outliers mentioned, such as the work of Shakti Community Council, Aotearoa New Zealand feminism is still not inclusive of all women, and significantly lacks an intersectional approach. It is crucial that the feminist actions and theories we draw on in ‘dangerous times’ are inclusive and intersectional, because it is far from certain that Aotearoa New Zealand holds a clear feminist ‘Trump’ card over the United States.

*SALLY CRAWFORD is currently completing her Masters degree in Geography at the University of Auckland. In 2017 she completed her Honours dissertation on the current articulation of feminism in New Zealand which is summarised in this essay. She is currently researching how heteronormative femininity is reproduced through the body, and exploring this concept through the case study of vulval pain conditions. She hopes to contribute to wider works of feminist political geography, and through her work, aims to give a voice to groups often left out of the public and/or academic domain.*

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