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BOOK REVIEW

Scottish Gaelic revitalisation: Progress and aspiration

1 | INTRODUCTION

This review considers the revitalisation programme for Scottish Gaelic (referred to simply as 'Gaelic' [galik] by its speakers) which has gathered pace since the 1980s. Gaelic is a minority Celtic language with approximately 58,000 speakers in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2015) and 1,500 speakers in Canada (Statistique Canada, 2016). Gaelic in Scotland developed from the Old Irish spoken by people moving back and forth between Ireland and Scotland in the 4th–5th centuries and eventually became the language spoken across almost all of Scotland in the high medieval era (11th–12th centuries). Since this time, language shift has been taking place in Scotland and locations where the majority of the population speak Gaelic are now confined to north and west Highland areas such as the Western Isles (Outer Hebrides). Frequent waves of migration from Scotland have led to diasporic populations of Gaelic speakers including the substantial settlements in Nova Scotia, Canada, where many Gaelic speakers emigrated in the late18th and early 19th centuries.

The texts reviewed here document the process of language shift but especially focus on revitalisation efforts undertaken in order to increase speaker numbers and also increase the contexts and usage of Gaelic. As both works demonstrate, the revitalisation programme has its origins in the 18th and 19th centuries but really gained momentum in the 1980s with the advent of increased Gaelic broadcasting, education in Gaelic, and the subsequent Gaelic Language Act in 2005, which gave Gaelic in Scotland equal legal status to English. Each work takes quite a different approach to considering these issues: McLeod (2020) is a historical and legal analysis of language policy from 1872 to 2020 and McEwan-Fujita (2020) collects the outcome of several linguistic anthropological studies conducted with different Gaelic-speaking groups and organisations. Together, these works provided different angles and levels of analysis of the Gaelic revitalisation programme and offer substantial inspiration for future work. As well as giving a detailed picture of the Gaelic context, these works will be useful for those working in other minority language contexts, linguistic anthropology and language policy.

Readers of *Journal of Sociolinguistics* will undoubtedly be familiar with Nancy Dorian's seminal sociolinguistic study of Gaelic language shift (Dorian, 1981) and other works by this author. This ethnographic tradition inspired the current work by McEwan-Fujita, while McLeod builds on former historical and policy analyses such as proposed by MacKinnon (1974) and Withers (1984). Both of the current works are situated in a flourishing of Gaelic sociolinguistic research conducted since the Gaelic Language Act in 2005. In particular, several edited collections have combined the efforts of a number of scholars conducting research in this area such as McLeod (2006), Smith-Christmas et al. (2018), and MacLeod and Smith-Christmas (2019). Recent efforts in Gaelic sociolinguistics have been careful to combine detailed knowledge of Gaelic with theoretical insight from sociolinguistics in a clear interdisciplinary fashion, leading to a number of sociolinguistically oriented PhD theses and subsequent academic careers (Cole, 2015; Dunmore, 2015; Nance, 2013; NicLeòid, 2015; Smith-Christmas, 2012;

Will, 2012). Several of these were conducted under the banner of *Soillse*, a government-funded research network in Scotland promoting work on Gaelic. Most recently, some members of the network produced a large-scale survey of Gaelic use in the Hebrides (Ó Giollagáin et al., 2020).

In what follows for this review I will first summarise the contents of the two books, and then consider some fundamental questions which the revitalisation movement and these two texts invite us to reconsider. Namely, *what* is Gaelic, *where* is Gaelic and *who* are Gaelic speakers? I then discuss how these two excellent volumes contribute to the wider field beyond the context of Gaelic and suggest some future directions for research in this area.

2 | McLeod (2020)

The first work reviewed here, McLeod (2020), draws on language policy, history, law and sociolinguistics to discuss the development of Gaelic policy and development from 1872–2020. It is a comprehensive volume and will serve as *the* go-to reference source for anyone working on Gaelic for decades to come. More broadly, the work provides a case study of a minority language and how specific policy initiatives have impacted the population, as well as providing comparisons with Wales, Ireland, the Basque Country and other similar contexts. The approach taken throughout the work is historical analysis of original sources, archives, media and policy reports as well as close consultation of previous literature. McLeod provides insight and analysis throughout in order to give commentary on particular initiatives, such as the introduction of bilingual education in 1975 in the Western Isles (p. 168), and also suggestions for future directions, for example expanding the current Gaelic Medium Education offering to include a richer secondary experience (p. 311). The authority and confidence with which these reflections are given clearly stems from many years of experience in this field and close consultation with policymakers as well as community members.

The book is divided into eight main chapters, as well as an introduction and conclusion. The first two chapters set the scene for the main historical period covered in detail (1872–2020). Chapter 1 describes the context of Gaelic from the early medieval period up to the present day. As well as clarifying some complex medieval history and important modern history including the Highland Clearances (Devine, 2018), McLeod presents key tables, maps, and statistics to capture the community decline of Gaelic documented from the earliest census data (from 1891) to the present day. Chapter 2 provides more theoretical background to the policy and planning initiatives discussed in the book, and introduces important themes of the work such as the value of Gaelic, political tensions, and Scottish nationalism.

It is difficult to summarise the level of historical detail included in the main chapters without appearing superficial so I will pull out some key themes which attracted my attention from each chapter concerned. Chapter 3 considers the period from 1872, when compulsory education was introduced in Scotland, up to 1918. During this period some key institutions came to represent Gaelic interests such as *An Commun Gàidhealach* (the Highland Society). In 1872 the Education Act led to the expansion and centralisation of education across Scotland. Famously, this act made no mention of Gaelic, but McLeod nuances the argument demonstrating that some provisions for education in Gaelic were made although no resources or funding were initially provided.

Prior to reading this text I did not fully comprehend the extent of demographic change in Scotland during the inter-war period. McLeod (2020, p. 112) highlights that a 10th of the population (400,000 people) emigrated in the 1920s due to the social changes resulting from the First World War as well as a lack of employment in Scotland. Scots emigrated across the world, but in particular to Canada, the United States, Australia and England (Anderson, 2012). This mass emigration inevitably had disproportionate consequences on densely Gaelic-speaking areas which were typically rural and economi-

cally disadvantaged. Chapter 4 contains particularly useful discussion of the 1918 Education Act which included the 'Gaelic clause' stating that children of Gaelic-speaking parents should have 'adequate provision' for Gaelic educational attainment (p. 124). As well as summarising the considerable progress this recognition provided, McLeod also includes some reflection on varying parental demands and patchy provision across different parts of Scotland.

Chapter 5 covers considerable political and social developments in the post WW2 period. Among many other developments, McLeod discusses when controversies around Gaelic on road signs first became pertinent in Scotland during the 1970s. This question is still much debated in the media today. McLeod's contribution here is to give a historical dimension to the debate but a significant strength of the work here and throughout is the detailed comparison to other similar contexts. Specifically in the case of road signs the most meaningful comparison is drawn with the context is Wales and McLeod is able to compare legislation and its influence across both nations.

In the 1980s a large number of improvements in provision for Gaelic were made during a time which is often characterised as the 'Gaelic Renaissance' (MacLeod, 1989). In the chapter covering this period (Chapter 6), there are extremely helpful discussions about the development and expansion of Gaelic Medium Education, Gaelic broadcasting and the founding of the Gaelic college, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig. One aspect of this period with which I was less familiar were the innovative measures taken by the new Western Isles Council, which quickly adopted a Gaelic working name (*Comhairle nan Eilean* 'Council of the Isles') and retains a Gaelic name to this day (p. 179). The Comhairle were a leading authority in establishing a bilingual working culture, Gaelic policies, and attempting to recruit Gaelic-speaking staff. This chapter also considers the political foundations leading to the Gaelic Language Act in 2005 and McLeod discusses legal actions such as the Stewart bill in 1980 which aimed to increase support for Gaelic, and a court test case where a defendant aimed to use Gaelic in legal proceedings (p. 201).

Chapters 7–8 consider the time period from the commitment to Scottish Devolution in 1997 to the current day. During this time, Scotland gained considerable political and legal independence from England. The most significant development during this time was of course the implementation of the Gaelic Language Act (Scotland) in 2005. While the Act provides considerable recognition for Gaelic, I found it very helpful to read McLeod's reflections on the actual wording of the Act and how much potential content was omitted in comparison to the Welsh Language Act (1993) (p. 253). Considering the political landscape of contemporary Scotland, the dominance of the Scottish National Party (SNP) is very extensive, but McLeod's description of how the Conservative and then Labour administrations in Westminster led to considerable progress for Gaelic was very illuminating. McLeod does not hesitate to criticise the SNP's approach to Gaelic planning and provision describing their attitude as 'lukewarm' (p. 275). A final example of McLeod's honest yet constructive contribution in this work is in the description of the current state of *Bòrd na Gàidhlig* (Gaelic Language Board), the national authority responsible for Gaelic development (p. 281). Almost all funding available for Gaelic is controlled by this authority and anyone involved in Gaelic development or research will need to work with them closely. However, McLeod does not hesitate to describe the challenges recently faced by this organisation such as unstable leadership, understaffing, budget restrictions, accusations of mismanagement following an audit by consulting firm Deloitte in 2019 (pp. 281–285). It is only by confronting such difficult issues honestly that progress can be made.

3 | McEwan-Fujita (2020)

The second work discussed in this review, McEwan-Fujita (2020), combines nine previously published articles and chapters by the author with three new chapters. The fieldwork and analysis were conducted

in 1998–2011 and consider aspects of Gaelic during 1990–2000. Due to the rapid pace of development in policy surrounding Gaelic and also the proliferation of research in Gaelic sociolinguistics in the last decade, it is helpful to have a historical record of Gaelic's situation at the turn of the century. One possible criticism of this collection is that the book was published recently but only considers literature available at the time of writing making it a little anachronistic. For example, even in the newly published chapters (2, 3 and 6), literature published since 2015 is largely not considered. However, I found it exciting and inspiring to read much of McEwan-Fujita's published work together in one place and to see the development of thinking across multiple projects and research contexts.

The work is divided into five parts. Part 1 (Chapters 1–2) considers the history and theoretical background which has shaped McEwan-Fujita's career. The first chapter gives a very helpful historical outline of the field of linguistic anthropology in Gaelic-speaking communities and traces how approaches have evolved. This sets the foreground the McEwan-Fujita's own ethnographic research in Uist, Western Isles, described in Chapter 2. In this chapter, McEwan-Fujita asks us to consider our position as researchers and the power imbalances this may create. Specific to the Gaelic context, she describes the particular abundance of research in all forms in the Western Isles. I found it very striking to read the description of 'Stephanie', a non-academic with an interest in folklore who collected substantial recordings from Gaelic speakers in Uist. In particular, McEwan-Fujita describes how the participants saw no distinction between her research conducted with the backing and ethical procedure of a large university, and Stephanie's self-funded work. Many Uist inhabitants even felt 'betrayed' by researchers who had previously visited the island and misrepresented their experience. In particular, McEwan-Fujita's participants cited two books published in 1952 and 1998 which were written in an 'English imperialist tradition' (McEwan-Fujita, 2020, pp. 49–50) and made highly derogatory comments about local people. These reflections and the case of Stephanie's work highlight that researchers must treat participants with respect and that we must humbly consider our position from the participants' point of view.

Part 2 (Chapters 3–5) conducts detailed analysis of some of the persistent discourses surrounding Gaelic language existence and revitalisation. Specifically, Chapter 3 considers an extraordinary exchange on the BBC programme 'Newsnight Scotland' in 2000 where Gaelic was attacked using a series of frequently occurring tropes such as Gaelic being portrayed as 'barbarous' or a 'deficit' in some way. These are positioned to lead into the trope of Gaelic being allowed to 'naturally' die out as it is not suitable for the modern world. In Chapter 4, McEwan-Fujita explores how academic discourses link into popular and media discourses. In particular she traces the evolution of a guesstimate approximation in Krauss (1992) about the number of speakers needed for a language to be 'safe' and demonstrates how this concept became taken as fact and propagated throughout subsequent works and media coverage (see the excellent Figure 4.1, p. 103). Chapter 5 focusses on revitalisation discourse. I found the historical dimension in this chapter particularly useful: the analysis covers 1700–2000. McEwan-Fujita covers seven types of 'redemptive and romantic praise' which she has identified in the media surrounding reasons for Gaelic revitalisation (pp. 125–144). These include aspects such as Gaelic being 'natural' and bilingualism being beneficial.

One of the seven types of revitalisation discourse identified in Chapter 5 is Gaelic as a 'commodity' and this notion is most fully explored in Part 3 (Chapters 6–7), which discusses neoliberal ideology and revitalisation. McEwan-Fujita explores the implications of how the Gaelic revitalisation movement adapted to the neoliberal politics introduced to the United Kingdom by Thatcher in the 1980s with long-lasting effect. Chapter 6 considers the commodification of Gaelic both in terms of positive aspects such as how heritage became a tool in arguing for economic benefits to tourism, but also in terms of how detractors used economic arguments on a per capita basis to argue against development of Gaelic media. Chapter 7 presents a specific analysis of the 'Gaelic in the Community Scheme', a fund set up to allow

local organisations access to funding in 1995. This chapter documents the complex structure of access to funding communities needed to negotiate and how acronyms and terminology needs to be acquired by local organisations before progress can be made. Once again McEwan-Fujita reflects on difficult issues associated with such policies, for example how technical documentation in Gaelic can challenge beliefs held by speakers about how Gaelic should be used.

Part 4 (Chapters 8–10) considers the use of Gaelic in new contexts as a result of the revitalisation movement. Firstly, Chapter 8 discusses McEwan-Fujita's ethnographic experience with L2 Gaelic speakers in the Western Isles. Through extensive reflection on her own experience as well as interviews with classmates, McEwan-Fujita explores the challenges faced by speakers acquiring Gaelic in the Western Isles such as finding an immersive language experience in a context where Gaelic is mainly spoken among close-knit networks of family and neighbours (p. 209). Chapter 9 continues this theme and considers literacy skills in Gaelic. Perhaps specific to the context of minority languages, people learning Gaelic may acquire literacy skills which first-language speakers might lack. In both of these chapters, McEwan-Fujita suggests potential directions for language revitalisation based on optimising experiences for L2 users and expanding the skillset of the speaker base. Finally, Chapter 10 is an ethnographic account of participant observation conducted in a Gaelic-speaking office. The concept of an office space where Gaelic is the main language of communication is, as McEwan-Fujita explains, a relatively new one linked to the revitalisation movement and has led to the development of new uses and registers for Gaelic. McEwan-Fujita explains how speakers negotiate register expansion in a way which is authentically acceptable but also adapted to the new context of Gaelic usage.

In Part 5 (Chapters 11–12), McEwan-Fujita turns her focus to specific case studies of revitalisation efforts on the ground. In Chapter 11, this considers the context of Nova Scotia, and how Gaelic might fit into Fishman (1991)'s Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale. A modified scale is proposed along with recommendations for expanding the revitalisation programme. The final chapter of the work outlines the aims of a dialect revitalisation project proposal on Islay, *Ìle ga Bruidhinn* 'Islay speaking it [Gaelic]'. The programme proposed specifically targets the dialect of Islay and uses theoretical models such as apprenticeship through legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This chapter was originally published in 2014 and relates to research conducted before this date. It would have been helpful to have a final recent update paragraph or additional conclusion chapter to update readers on the project's progress or challenges faced.

4 | GAELIC REVITALISATION: FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

Both of these texts do not shy away from addressing difficulty realities and asking challenging questions of the progress made so far in Gaelic revitalisation. In McEwan-Fujita's work I was struck by her level of self-honesty in situating her position as an L2 Gaelic user and guest in the communities where she conducts her work. She is also clear to state the real challenges faced when Gaelic expands to new contexts in terms of its authentic acceptance by speakers as well as its practical value for all concerned. McLeod also is unafraid to challenge what he sees as political shortcomings and obstacles posed in, for example, the expansion of Gaelic Medium Education in Edinburgh. In minority language settings such as Gaelic there is such close collaboration between academia, communities and politicians that it is sometimes not straightforward to reflect critically and constructively. Yet both of these texts provide some very helpful commentary as well as description.

In this section I will explore three fundamental themes which are examined from multiple angles in both texts and are crucial to planning for Gaelic revitalisation into the future: *what* is Gaelic, *where* is Gaelic and *who* are Gaelic speakers?

4.1 | What is Gaelic?

McLeod (2020, 3) summarises the difficult position of Gaelic in Scotland:

> Gaelic has often been presented as a national language of Scotland, or indeed as the national language, but today only 1.1 per cent of Scots can speak it… and it has not been spoken by a majority of the population for well over five hundred years. National(ist) movements in Scotland have generally placed little emphasis on Gaelic, and many Scots have little awareness of the language. At the same time, Gaelic clearly has a significant national resonance in Scotland and cannot plausibly be regarded merely as a regional language or the language of a discrete cultural minority.

The tension between *a* national language and *the* national language has profound implications for language policy and provision. If Gaelic is *the* national language, then a clear case could be made for Gaelic as part of an independence movement as was the case for Irish in Ireland, or it could be privileged above other languages similar to Welsh in Wales. However, if Gaelic is *a* national language alongside Scots, British Sign Language, and possibly recent immigrant languages such as Polish or Punjabi then the case for support is potentially less strong but could be legally clarified as in the case of Switzerland. Recent legislation such as the British Sign Language Act (2015) implies that Scotland is heading for recognising several national languages including BSL, Gaelic and Scots, but political support for Gaelic from the Scottish National Party has so far been 'lukewarm' (McLeod, 2020, 275) and progress towards the National Plan for Gaelic stemming from the Gaelic Language Act (2005) was extremely slow (McEwan-Fujita, 2020, 138; McLeod, 2020 Chapters 6–7). Negotiating the place and role of Gaelic in contemporary Scotland is clearly an unresolved challenge, yet fundamental to planning initiatives for the future.

A further important point raised by McEwan-Fujita (2020)'s work is the expansion of Gaelic in Canada, especially Nova Scotia (Chapter 11). While much of the research on Gaelic has been in the context of Scotland, we must also refer to Gaelic as a Canadian language alongside other recent immigrant languages in Canada such as English and French. I consider the location of Gaelic in Canada more fully in the section which follows.

4.2 | Where is Gaelic?

This question was first posed by Oliver (2006) in the context of the newly implemented Gaelic Language Act. Oliver (2006) discusses his research among young people in Skye and Glasgow and asks readers to reflect on geographical diversity, social diversity, and Gaelic proficiency across what might be called 'the community'. The notion of community is not necessarily straightforward and can be understood in multiple senses. Here, I will focus on two themes which both McEwan-Fujita and McLeod cover across their works: firstly, the geographical location of Gaelic speakers and how this is changing with revitalisation, and secondly the challenges of defining the 'Gaelic community' and meeting its diverse needs.

Both authors extensively cover the physical geography of where Gaelic might be spoken along a number of dimensions. Considering the historical context, McLeod traces the development of a Highland versus Lowland division in Scotland which appears to have emerged in the late 14th century (McLeod, 2020, p. 9). This division remained significant for Gaelic policy in the 20th century, for

example in the notion in 1918 that Gaelic education should be adequately provided in 'Gaelic-speaking areas' loosely corresponding to the western Highlands. As well as Gaelic provision in parts of the Highlands, McLeod's work also demonstrates the historical and continued significance of Gaelic activity in the Scottish Lowlands. For example, *An Commun Gàidhealach* (The Highland Society) was largely physically located in the lowlands and the location of the more recently formed *Bòrd na Gàidhlig* (Gaelic Language Board) in urban Inverness has been the subject of some controversy (McLeod, 2020, 285). Demonstrating the importance of lowland areas in promoting Gaelic development across time, the first Gaelic Medium Education units were opened in urban settings in Glasgow and Inverness in 1985, and urban lowland contexts continue to be highly significant in educating large numbers of children through Gaelic.

McEwan-Fujita's ethnographic fieldwork was largely conducted in rural communities such as Uist and provides an in-depth exploration of the experiences of both traditional speakers and new speakers in this area. Despite rural, island communities such as Uist being the location of the highest proportion of Gaelic speakers, a Gaelic-speaking environment is not necessarily the experience of all people located in Uist. For example, McEwan-Fujita (2020, p. 125) discusses the reality for 'Jean', an L2 user of Gaelic with Gaelic-speaking family. Due to the minoritised context of Gaelic even in places like Uist somehow fluency in Gaelic for Jean seems to remain just out of reach despite her best efforts.

A further dimension to *where* Gaelic speakers might physically be located is provided by McEwan-Fujita's discussion of Gaelic in Nova Scotia (Chapter 11). Gaelic speakers first emigrated to Nova Scotia in the late 18th century, with the main period of migration being 1770–1840 (McEwan-Fujita, 2020, p. 287). The mass emigration from Scotland was largely due to the Highland Clearances, a period in the 18th and 19th centuries where land use in Scotland was reformed towards substantial agricultural estates, and large numbers of small-scale farmers and tenants were evicted. Those evicted were often forced or incentivised to emigrate (Devine, 2018). It is estimated that in 1770–1850 around 50,000 highlanders arrived in Canada and were able to establish fairly homogenous Gaelic-speaking communities (Kennedy, 2002). Gaelic use in Nova Scotia declined in the 20th century but is now experiencing a dynamic revival. The contemporary Gaelic community in Canada appears to be vibrant, enthusiastic and expanding. For example, a recent $2 million investment was announced to open the first Gaelic medium school outwith Scotland in Mabou, Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia. This chapter was especially welcomed as the Gaelic community in Nova Scotia has been understudied in Gaelic academia so far (see also Dunmore, 2020).

It is notable that the Gaelic terms corresponding most closely to 'Highland' and 'Lowland' (*Gàidhealtachd* and *Galldachd* respectively) do not necessarily refer to geographical locations specifically but more to a Gaelic cultural zone and a non-Gaelic cultural zone (McLeod, 2020, p. 11). This fluidity in meaning is felicitous for the changing physical geography of Gaelic as the revitalisation programme leads to an expanding sphere of cultural influence. Changes due to revitalisation have necessarily led to a re-examination of what is meant by 'Gaelic community' (Oliver, 2006, p. 156). This is explored throughout McLeod's work in the tensions between what should morally be provided by the state to support the needs of Gaelic speakers and where it should be provided, but also in the analysis of the growth of new speakers from a variety of backgrounds who may form Gaelic social networks across new spaces (p. 314 and 335). The diversity of new speakers may possibly lead a future levelling of traditional dialects and loss of very local community distinctiveness. McEwan-Fujita (2020) explains in Chapter 12 the numbers of hours and resources required to train a meaningful number of dialect users in Islay and the task is indeed daunting. However, such a practical and detailed proposal in a specific context is a useful tool for future planning initiatives. Finally, McLeod (2020, 327) hints of the growing importance of virtual and imagined communities. Since publication of both volumes, it

has been made abundantly clear that online communities will be a significant social structure for the foreseeable future as was indeed predicted in Oliver (2006, p. 166).

4.3 | Who are Gaelic speakers?

As discussed above, the revitalisation movement has led to some changes in the location of Gaelic both in physical space but also in ideological space. Due to revitalisation efforts, 'many thousands of people know and use Gaelic today who would not do so if there had not been such great improvements in the status of the language and the provision to support its maintenance over the past forty years' (McLeod, 2020, 336). These changes have brought about some transformations as to who uses Gaelic compared to before revitalisation. Considering Gaelic speakers of the past 120 years, the stereotypical person might have been someone from the Western Isles from a crofting background. McLeod (2020, p. 16) cites Burnett (2011, p. 271) in stating that crofting became the 'essential embodiment of the "Gaelic way of life"'. Language shift in Scotland from the late middle ages onwards meant that the upper-class aristocracy as well as middle-class bards and lawyers shifted to English leaving the remaining Gaelic speakers as disproportionately working class and employed in agriculture (McEwan-Fujita, 2020, p. 268). Revitalisation has led to the creation of new roles and uses for Gaelic in typically middle-class occupations such as publishing, media, education, and language development. This is most fully explored in the ethnography conducted at the Commun na Gàidhlig office in McEwan-Fujita (2020; Chapter 10). Here, she describes how the employees negotiate the register expansion for the new use of Gaelic in a middle-class office environment providing detail to explore these large demographic shifts.

As the 'Gaelic community' expands in social diversity, negotiation is also needed around the traditional ethno-linguistic label for Gaelic speakers, 'Gael'. Historically, racialised arguments about the Gaels being a separate ethnic group were used in the 18th–19th centuries to both 'civilise' a hostile people, but also to romanticise their culture (McLeod, 2020, p. 13; McEwan-Fujita, 2020, p. 80). Recent survey work in the Western Isles has noted that there is now a large generational split in people identifying with this label where older inhabitants identify as Gaels and younger people typically do not (Ó Giollagáin et al., 2020). Other research has shown that there is some confusion about what is meant by 'Gael' and no clear agreement among Gaelic speakers and non-Gaelic speakers (Oliver, 2002 ; Dunmore, 2019 ; McLeod, 2020, 314). However, McLeod finishes his book by citing an author advocating wide expansion of the Gael family to include all with Gaelic language ability (McLeod, 2020, p. 335). This definition is pragmatic to the challenges posed by language minoritisation and the progress which the revitalisation movement has enabled.

5 | CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIOLINGUISTICS

Language revitalisation programmes allow us to confront and re-examine fundamental concepts such as those identified in the section above. However, such reflection can be fruitful in any language community. As sociolinguists we should not take community membership and nature for granted but continually reflect on their evolving and fluid nature. For example, the geographical spread of the revitalisation programme now across continents and virtual space necessitates a deanchoring of physical geography and 'community' in the Gaelic context. A parallel could be drawn with the mobile lives and intercontinental networks of many people globally.

Both texts reviewed here ultimately adopt an inclusive approach to speakerhood which partly stems from the pragmatism of needing to value absolutely everyone with linguistic competence in a minori-

tised language context where Gaelic is sometimes treated with apathy and even hostility. While the Gaelic context clearly necessitates this approach, it is helpful to scholars working in any sociolinguistic context to see the extent of inclusivity and consideration of how each speaker can contribute to an overall community aim.

Finally, a clear strength of both of the works reviewed here is that they consider the historical dimension to the Gaelic context of revitalisation and its implications on the present. Indeed, this is the whole aim of McLeod's book. The depth of understanding in how the past can impact the present presented here is an exemplary standard for future language policy and linguistic anthropology scholars.

6 | DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE WORK

In this final section, I will identify some issues which caught my attention as particularly fruitful directions for future research. Firstly and most importantly, McEwan-Fujita (2020, p. xiv) states 'Gaelic language revitalization research should be conducted with ethics, cooperation, and a view towards immediate practical application'. I am in clear agreement that when conducting research, especially with minority communities, we must always be respectful and offer some benefit to our participants. Readers of *Journal of Sociolinguistics* will often be selecting participants for a particular social or demographic characteristic, so it is extremely important to consider this cooperative and respectful understanding. Keeping these issues in mind, I have identified three further themes which would be extremely interesting to pursue in future work: (1) sociolinguistic mentors, (2) social categories and Gaelic, and (3) virtual and imagined communities.

The concept of sociolinguistic mentors is discussed in McEwan-Fujita (2020, p. 235). She describes the fluent speakers who were particularly enthusiastic and patient with the L2 users in her study as they were progressing to fluency. McEwan-Fujita states that all her participants had a particular individual who had gone out of their way to help them, usually a family member, church acquaintance or colleague. This experience will, I'm sure, resonate with anyone who has acquired an L2. However, McEwan-Fujita (2020, p. 238) highlights that little is known about who becomes a sociolinguistic mentor, why they do it, and why this approach can have such huge impact on an individual's linguistic development.

As identified above, the concept of ethnicity and Gaelic speakerhood is unclear. Some Gaelic speakers and non-Gaelic speakers identify with the label 'Gael', but many do not (McEwan-Fujita, 2020, p. 68). More recent welcoming of new speakers and expanding notions of what it means to be a Gaelic speaker have led to calls for anyone with language ability to be considered a 'Gael' (McLeod, 2020, p. 335), presumably as greater distinct identification may lead to greater group affinity and political protection. It will be interesting to see how this inclusive call for all to be Gaels develops. Another aspect to shifting identities and Gaelic speakerhood which merits further research in the future is the development of social class within the Gaelic-speaking community. McEwan-Fujita (2020, Chapter 10) extensively explores how Gaelic was formerly (mainly) associated with working-class occupations, but this is now radically shifting due to revitalisation employment opportunities. Similarly, McLeod (2020, p. 175) explains that some key figures in the revitalisation movement were from crofting backgrounds but migrated from the Western Isles to pursue higher education and middle-class careers. These social class transitions will have long-lasting implications for the revitalisation movement and more work is needed to understand how Gaelic can be of benefit to all members of society in the future.

Thirdly, McLeod (2020, p. 327) hints at the growing importance of virtual networks of Gaelic speakers, while admitting that these cannot replace a face-to-face established physical network. I also recognise that it is vital to maintain physical communities of people living in proximity to one another, but these can be supplemented and possibly extended by more diffuse virtual networks. Virtual networks

would seem an important way to allow L2 users access to Gaelic, especially if their personal circumstances do not allow physical attendance at classes on a regular basis. The University of the Highlands and Islands has pioneered distance learning for many years and now boasts thousands of graduates from distance Gaelic courses. The pandemic has only increased and accelerated growth in Gaelic lessons, online music events, and collaborations from all over the world. For example, McLeod (2020, p. 312) notes that in late 2019 there were 115,000 people signed up to a newly released Gaelic Duolingo and in mid-2021 there are now 444,000 people enrolled (Duolingo, 2021). Future work could examine the extent of these online communities and explore how they can be supported in their use of Gaelic and harnessed as an asset in the revitalisation movement.

To sum up, both of the texts reviewed here are critical, constructive and provide an exemplary level of detail. The focus is naturally on Gaelic, but the work has wide implications for language policy, linguistic anthropology, and minority language sociolinguistics more generally. I consider myself fortunate to have read and reviewed these two excellent texts, which advanced my knowledge and provided much inspiration.

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