Beverley Abela

Talking Women. An exploration of Maltese women's discourse with regards to gender

Simone de Beauvoir famously said, "one is not born, but becomes a woman". In my research, I will be exploring how one becomes a woman, what makes a woman, and how, in turn women do or perform their gender. Furthermore, this research looks at discourse and how discourse might help or hinder women in defining and expressing their gender; whilst inquiring about the level of self-reflexivity one must hone to be able to undergo such process. This research will focus on the local context and its implications for cis and transgender women living in Malta. The hypothesis posed for this study will be addressed from a post-structuralist feminist standpoint, focusing on theories such as Queer Theory to be able to explore the performativity of gender through discourse. The methodology which will be adopted will be a qualitative one. Stratified random sampling will be used to enrol participants so that equal representation will be obtained from the pre-set subgroups. The methods which will be used to gather information will be both unstructured and structured interviews, data gathered from these interviews will be analysed through discourse analysis and thematic analysis so as to be able to analyse the discourse as well as the emerging commonalities between the interviewees.

Aleks Dimitrijevic

"Proponents of the Rights of Men or Enemies of the Rights of Women? Analysis of the Goals, Targets and Modus Operandi of the Men Rights Movement"

Women's rights movements in general (and feminism in particular) have had to overcome and battle resistance like any other civil and social rights movement in history. The opposition to emancipation and liberation of women is usually implicit and originates in traditional social structures that are resistant to change, which explains why the struggle for equality is still ongoing.

Yet, in more recent times and especially since the advance of internet, there is another, more explicit form of resistance to advancement of gender equality, in the form of organised and semi-organised movements of men, often referred to as Men Rights Movement (MRM)

My research is an investigation into the modus operandi of MRM groups, their political and social sphere, interests, strategy, arguments, and tactics, use of language and marketing of their ideas. Most importantly, my research is examining if those ideas have found fertile ground in the local context and how this activism against gender equality could be counteracted and confronted.

Niamh Donoghue

MENtal Wellbeing: Listening to the Discourse Surrounding Mental Wellbeing and Help Seeking Behavours

This research explores how young Irish men orientate themselves towards mental wellbeing related issues. Research literature suggests that there is a disparity in the experience of mental wellbeing and help seeking practices among men and women in western societies. It has been widely acclaimed that men tend to have greater difficulties in seeking help, for social, emotional and psychological problems, especially when compared to their female counterparts. However, much of what we know about these difficulties have been derived from research framed around essentialist interpretations of gender. This tendency to homogenize men neglects to account for individual differences. As a result, explanations of men's 'poorer' mental wellbeing and help seeking practices are often reduced to debates about the influence of masculinities. Taking a feminist post-structuralist approach, this study brings together the individual, social and historical, to create a new debate around issues of gender and mental wellbeing. Accessing the everyday experiences and understandings of men, opens up an opportunity to look at how these accounts are constituted by and interact within, multi-level systems and processes of power.

Nathalie Grima

Gender perspectives on resilient social capital:
A comparison of Maltese and Syrian low-income households in Malta

Low-income households can often find themselves struggling to make ends meet till they receive their next pay-check. The lack of financial capital can give rise to a strong sense of emotional insecurity, and individuals and families may have to resort to other forms of capital that offer support. Social networks provide a very useful type of capital to help such households in building their resilience to prevent material and psychological breakdown. This research will therefore look at how people build resilient social capital through the help of social networks. The research aims to adopt an alternative approach to blaming people for being poor, or to label them as vulnerable, but will instead look at the strengths and skills that groups and individuals use to cope and to improve their social well-being.

The chosen methodology is that of a feminist critical approach, including the intersectionality perspective. The aim is to look at how gendered standpoint experiences can indeed influence the type of resilient social capital formed.

This is also a comparative and qualitative case study between two different, but likewise marginalised groups, namely, a purposive sample of Maltese low-income households in receipt of social benefits located in a particular area of Malta, and a purposive sample of Syrian migrants who have a subsidiary protection status. Working with both local and migrant research participants can reveal distinct gendered patterns of coping and resource networking based on their different citizenship status and ethnicity. On the other hand, it may also show that similarities exist between the two groups, such as, gendered negotiations within households and gendered patterns in networks.

Barbara Stelmaszek

"The Unusual victims – women who kill. Keeping womensurvivors of male intimate partner violence from prison"

Barbara's research deals primarily with the prevention of lethal intimate partner violence while also focussing on the study of the social representations of women survivors of intimate partner violence, including women who are victims of abuse and end up killing the men who had abused them. Utilising the analysis of stories told about different types of survivors and those told by the survivors themselves, Barbara aims to broaden the available narratives available to women victims about themselves and their agency, build upon the understanding of coercive control (a gendered form of intimate partner violence) by exploring its impact on the self, and utilise the findings to contribute to the prevention of all forms of intimate partner violence, and including especially those where there is potential for lethal outcomes. The research is qualitative and relies upon two different methods of textual analysis (qualitative content analysis and narrative inquiry) and the outcomes should provide an understanding of the European conceptualisation of women victims of intimate partner violence and the role of gender in this conceptualisation while contrasting it with the information available about victims who utilise lethal violence as part of their agency. Lastly, the research into the women's life stories that also include them committing lethal acts should create a better consideration of their situation and hence conceive potential avenues for prevention.

Silvana Zammit

Studying Family Businesses through a Gendered Lens

Most family businesses around the world are family owned and are founded by couples. Usually, the female works in the family business, however, very often, she is not paid for the work that she conducts, which leaves her with no financial resources. She is assigned invisible work, while the male spouse or partner is the owner of the company. When the marriage or partnership dissolves, she would not be able to claim her rights on the business, because she was never registered as a partner of the company. The aim of this research is to look at how cultural expectations can influence social practices even in family businesses. This is a qualitative case study of ten family businesses and the research shall take a feminist critical approach, using feminist standpoint and feminist legal theories.