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Abstract Book

Exploring Identities, Challenging Boundaries



A

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"Dejjem ninkwieta fuq il-flus..." The gendered dimensions of emotional inequalities in managing household money in Malta

Drawing on a critical feminist qualitative study of eight married heterosexual couples in Malta, interviewed both jointly and individually, this paper examines the emotional experience and emotional inequalities embedded in household money management. It explores how partners interpret responsibility, worry, and confidence in everyday financial decision-making and how these affective dimensions shape the gendered organisation of domestic economic life.

Analysis of 24 in-depth, semi-structured interviews reveals a persistent emotional asymmetry: wives consistently shoulder a disproportionate share of financial anxiety, anticipatory planning, and self-doubt regarding budgeting, spending, and saving. This remains evident even in couples who describe their financial arrangements as "shared." In contrast, husbands more frequently articulate — or are portrayed by their spouses as embodying — feelings of confidence, expertise, or delegated responsibility. Many men frame financial management as a technical or even an enjoyable task, rather than an ongoing emotional burden. Notably, this sense of ease is not mirrored when wives take primary responsibility for the household finances.

These dynamics reflect entrenched cultural norms that position women as the emotional guardians of household wellbeing and men as competent financial actors within marriage. The study demonstrates that emotional inequalities, particularly around anxiety, responsibility, and confidence, constitute an under-recognised dimension of the gendered division of labour.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

EMOTIONAL INEQUALITY

ANXIETY

MARRIAGE

GENDERED DIVISION OF LABOUR



A

Abela Gatt, Beverley

MCAST

Deconstructing Gender and Power: A Feminist Post-Structuralist Discourse Analysis of "Il-Każin tal-Imqarbin" (Misbehaved Club)

This paper explores how *Il-Każin tal-Imqarbin*, a contemporary theatrical work set in 1980s Malta, constructs and challenges gendered and heteronormative discourses through the lens of Feminist Post-Structuralist Discourse Analysis (FPDA). By critically engaging with the play's language, character dynamics, and narrative structure, the research investigates how power, gender performativity, and marginalisation are communicated, contested, and reimagined within a historically queer-invisible Maltese context.

The study highlights the importance of examining cultural productions as sites where silenced LGBTQ+ narratives can be reclaimed and made visible, particularly in periods marked by institutionalised heteronormativity and social conservatism. The analysis focuses not only on the play's historical backdrop but also on its continuing relevance, demonstrating how *Il-Każin tal-Imqarbin* destabilises rigid binary gender roles. By adopting a feminist post-structuralist perspective, the paper examines how discourses surrounding gender and sexuality are both reflected and subverted within the script, offering alternative ways of understanding subjectivity and agency.

FPDA

GENDER PERFORMATIVITY

HETERONORMATIVITY

QUEER REPRESENTATION

POWER AND RESISTANCE



A

Agius Tabone, Vania

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Institutional Contradictions and Gendered Realities: A Feminist Reworking of New Institutional Theory in Higher Education

This article investigates how formal institutional frameworks and family-friendly policies at the University of Malta intersect with gendered cultural norms to shape uneven outcomes for working mothers. Using an integrated analytical approach that draws on New Institutional Theory (NIT), Feminist Institutionalism, and Institutional Ethnography (IE), the study reveals how organisational structures that appear inclusive on the surface are often undermined by discretionary practices and informal expectations that reproduce gendered hierarchies.

The research combines textual analysis of institutional documents, survey data, and qualitative interviews with academic and support-staff mothers. The findings demonstrate a consistent implementation gap between policy and practice, highlighting the influence of managerial discretion, entrenched power asymmetries, and the persistence of invisible labour. By bringing feminist institutional insights into conversation with NIT and IE, the study offers a more nuanced framework for understanding the motherhood penalty in academia and underscores the need for stronger accountability and gender-sensitive institutional practices.

The argument builds on and extends existing feminist scholarship on institutional processes and inequalities (Cacace, Mellino, & Recio, 2023; Chappell & Waylen, 2020; Monro, 2021; O'Connor, 2022; Smith & Griffith, 2022).

NEW INSTITUTIONAL THEORY

FEMINIST INSTITUTIONALISM

MOTHERHOOD PENALTY

HIGHER EDUCATION



A

Argun, Melike Gül Mürdük

Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi

Beyond the Anthropological Machine: A Biopolitical Reading of the Intersection Between Woman and Animal

Historically, the construction of the normative subject has perpetuated Cartesian dualism, establishing a framework where the "Other" is subjected to structural oppression under anthropocentric, patriarchal, speciesist, and capitalist hegemony. Stripped of subjectivity and reduced to objecthood, marginalized bodies are rendered violable, exploitable, and "killable," revealing violence as a systematic form of governance. Women and animals serve as the primary sites of this biopolitical administration.

Sovereign power employs a discursive violence — specifically, a two-way metaphorical transitivity — to legitimize this control: the animalization of women and the feminization of animals. Through this transitivity, both groups are abstracted from "rights-bearing subject" and drawn into the "bare life" field of biopolitical power. The body is thus reduced to an object, valued strictly for its productive capacity. The convergence of medical and industrial practices forms a biopolitical nexus between fertility and productivity. Andro-anthropocentrism codes these bodies as 'reproductive machines,' defining femininity exclusively through motherhood. This discourse frames "infertile" or trans women as ontologically "deficient."

A similar situation occurs in the dairy and meat industry through the female animal body. Within this capitalist system, where animals' right to life is contingent upon productivity, cows that lose their fertility or milk yield ("infertile") and "breeding" bulls deemed "dysfunctional" because they cannot perform "masculinity" are reclassified as disposable and are discarded. The intersectional oppression of women's and animals' bodies represents the most naked manifestation of power's authority to make live and kill over bodies. While women's bodies are rendered socially invisible, animals' bodies are physically destroyed. To this end, employing an ecofeminist animal studies perspective and critical discourse analysis, this study examines the categorization practices of sovereign power, presenting a conceptual framework that deconstructs the anthropocentric hierarchy.

BIOPOLITICS

ANDRO-ANTHROPOCENTRISM

INTERSECTIONALITY

ECOFEMINIST ANIMAL STUDIES

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS



A

Arvanitidou, Zoi

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The Role of AI in Beauty Standards and the Commodification of the Female Body in Fashion

This presentation critically examines the pervasive role of Artificial Intelligence in shaping contemporary beauty standards and the resulting commodification of the female body within fashion and beauty industries. AI systems do not merely reflect existing beauty norms but actively codify and reinforce a narrow, often Eurocentric, ideal (young, thin, white, symmetrical).

Through an analysis of biased datasets, model training, platform outputs (filters, avatars, virtual try-ons), and their psychosocial impacts, the presentation illustrates how AI transforms the female body into a measurable, optimizable, and commercially exchangeable digital asset. The presentation highlights the gendered feedback loops of the visibility economy, the intensification of bias, and the potential for coercive harms such as deepfakes.

Ultimately, the presentation proposes a framework for ethical AI governance, advocating for transparency, inclusive design, and critical digital literacy as essential feminist interventions to reclaim bodily autonomy and dignity in the algorithmic age.

AI

BEAUTY STANDARDS

FASHION

FEMALE BODY

COMMODIFICATION



A

Attard, Simone

Embryo Protection Authority

Assisted Reproductive technology (ART) in Malta

In Malta, assisted reproductive technology (ART) has been offered for the last thirteen years, however this small island in the Mediterranean has made huge steps in this field of reproduction.

Today Malta is considered as one of the best countries offering highly inclusive ART services, with legislation and public health services extended to individuals regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Following changes in legislation that came into effect in 2018, the law now recognizes a wide range of family structures, allowing access to IVF for single women, lesbian couples, and trans/non- binary individuals, provided they meet legal eligibility criteria.

In this keynote speech we will delve into the various combinations of services offered in Malta and the success of cycles both for heterosexual couples lesbian couples and single women. I will also provide number of children born with the use of third-party identity release donation and the safeguards in place for using gamete and embryo donation in Malta.

ASSISTED REPRODUCTION

INCLUSIVE IVF

MALTESE LEGISLATION

FAMILY DIVERSITY

GAMETE DONATION



B

Bajada, Maria and Pace Parascandalo, Rita

University of Malta

Lesbian Couples' Experiences of Maternity Care

Increasing international visibility of diverse family structures has drawn attention to the persistence of heteronormative assumptions within maternity care. Research indicates that lesbian couples frequently encounter inconsistent recognition, exclusionary language, and unequal inclusion across perinatal services. In Malta, although significant progress has been made in LGBTQ+ rights, no research has yet examined the maternity care experiences of lesbian couples. This study addresses that gap by exploring how lesbian couples in Malta experience pregnancy, childbirth, and early postnatal care.

This study aimed to explore the maternity care experiences of lesbian couples in Malta. Specifically, it examined their experiences during the antenatal, intrapartum, and early postpartum periods; the feelings evoked while receiving care; their particular needs and preferences; and the meanings they attributed to these experiences.

A qualitative research design informed by Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was employed. Audio-recorded semi-structured interviews were conducted with five lesbian couples who were at least 18 years old, were first-time parents, and had given birth in Malta within the previous three years. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed according to IPA principles, with Queer Theory informing interpretation.

Three overarching themes emerged: *Navigating Maternity Care*, *Recognition as a Legitimate Family*, and *Language and Belonging*. While many participants described aspects of care as inclusive and supportive, heteronormative structures remained embedded within maternity services, particularly in documentation practices and professional language. This study offers the first empirical insight into the maternity care experiences of lesbian couples in Malta and highlights the need for more inclusive policies, language, and practices within maternity care.

LESBIAN COUPLES

MATERNITY CARE

QUEER THEORY

CO-MOTHER

IPA



B

Baldacchino, Matthew and Mitchell, Kirstin

University of Glasgow

A Critical Policy Analysis of the National Sexual Health Strategy for Malta and Gozo

Malta's new National Sexual Health Strategy exists within a sociocultural context that is post-colonial, Catholic, and shaped by the political behaviours of Malta's microstate nature. While several wins exist, there remains a concerted lack of community-guided and stakeholder-driven input, and little state accountability. Notably, the value of participant-led policymaking and participatory approaches have been championed as preferred methods of informing global health policy.

This study aimed to analyse the Strategy against the views of professional stakeholders in Malta using two research questions: To what extent does Malta's new sexual health strategy reflect international standards and best practices in sexual and reproductive health policy? How do key professional stakeholders in Malta perceive the strategy's effectiveness in theory and potential for implementation?

An intra-paradigm qualitative mixed-methods analysis was performed. A conceptual framework was tailor-made for this study, marrying policy analysis frameworks with thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews. Kingdon's 'Multiple Streams Framework' and Bacchi's 'What Does The Problem Represent Approach' were used to analyse policy, and what this says about state interests. Interviews highlighted stakeholder perspectives including unmet needs and community sentiments.

The Strategy identifies key challenges including STIs, contraceptive access, and CSE. Biomedical and service-based solutions are prioritised, however there is a noted silence on abortion, migrant health, and church-state-private education (presenting a selective framing of SRHR). While improving on its 2010 iteration, it fails to consider rights-based approaches to reproductive health, including intersectionality. When compared to more expansive sexual health definitions and exemplary policy, there remain opportunities for further exploration and research, and the need for actionable measures with clear responsible parties and accountability frameworks. These findings support literature on participant-driven policy approaches.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HUMAN RIGHTS

POLICY ANALYSIS

HEALTH POLICY

STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

ELITE INFLUENCE



B

Baldacchino, Ruth

University College Dublin

Small-Island as Method: Decolonial Feminist Queer Governance

Malta is frequently celebrated as a European "LGBTIQ+ leader", topping equality indices and showcasing rapid legal reforms such as the 2015 Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act. At the same time, it is deeply shaped by colonial residues, Catholic authority, and the racialised logic of EU border regimes. Building on an ongoing PhD on the governance of international LGBTQI organisations, this paper uses Malta as a small-island Mediterranean site to develop a decolonial feminist queer governance framework for understanding how gender and sexualities are governed in and through ostensibly "progressive" contexts.

The paper is guided by two interrelated questions: (1) How does a small-island vantage point make visible the coloniality underpinning European gender and sexualities governance and "LGBTIQ leadership" narratives? (2) How might a decolonial feminist queer approach to "doing governance otherwise" open up practices of survival, refusal, care and collective accountability in Maltese, Mediterranean and transnational settings?

Conceptually, the paper brings decolonial feminism, Southern theory, queer of colour critique, and feminist institutional analysis (Lugones, Connell, Cohen, Muñoz, Glissant; Smith, Collins, Ahmed) into conversation to elaborate decolonial feminist queer governance as a framework that treats governance as a site of epistemic struggle rather than neutral administration. Methodologically, it draws on PhD research design, which combines critical analysis of institutional texts with autoethnographic insights from over two decades of involvement in Maltese and transnational LGBTQI activism and governance. "Small island as method" is the approach to foreground Malta as a peripheral Mediterranean site from which to interrogate how "European values", solidarity, and inclusion are mobilised, and how containment and refusal are negotiated across scales. The paper traces tensions between 'showcase governance', everyday 'regimes of containment' and 'insurgent governance in the cracks'.

COLONIALITY OF GENDER

EPISTEMIC JUSTICE

LGBTQI MOVEMENTS

SMALL ISLAND

MEDITERRANEAN QUEER POLITICS



B

Bartolo, Tabone Claudia

University of Malta

Intersex Experiences with Fertility and Healthcare

Understanding the lived fertility experiences of intersex individuals is a matter of profound bioethical and clinical importance, historically sidelined by a clinical focus on surgical 'normalization.' This paper combines qualitative data from intersex persons and medical professionals to analyse the systemic failures that have characterized reproductive care for this community and proposes a new paradigm of care grounded in partnership and patient autonomy.

The research employed a qualitative approach grounded in Feminist Bioethics to centre voices that were traditionally marginalized. A triangulated methodology drew upon data from seven intersex individuals (five women, two non-binary), through four semi-structured interviews and three published memoirs, and interviews with seven medical professionals from relevant specializations.

A powerful convergence of patient testimony and professional perspective emerged from the data. The core narrative from intersex persons details a journey marked by medical secrecy, systemic clinical failures, and the devastating discovery of decades-old medical deception. This testimony is corroborated by medical professionals, who not only acknowledge the legacy of secrecy but identify institutional gaps, such as the failure to transition complex cases from paediatric to adult care, as a key driver of these negative outcomes. Ultimately, these findings mandate a foundational shift away from a rigid, binary medical model that has pathologized intersex bodies. The paper argues that centring these lived experiences is a bioethical imperative, mandating a shift from a model of medical authority to one of genuine partnership to redress historical harms and ensure reproductive justice.

INTERSEX

FERTILITY

FEMINIST BIOETHICS

LIVED EXPERIENCE



B

Bonello, Solange

University of Malta

Disrupted Expectations: Gendered Norms and the “Good Pregnancy” Following Fetal Anomaly Diagnosis

This article explores how gendered expectations of pregnancy shape women’s experiences following a diagnosis of a fetal anomaly. Drawing on qualitative interviews with seven women, it examines how such diagnoses disrupt the normative ideal of the “good pregnancy” and the implications this carries for identity, emotional expression and social belonging. Adopting a postmodern feminist perspective, the analysis conceptualises pregnancy as a socially regulated experience, structured by expectations of happiness, fulfilment and progression towards a healthy birth. Participants’ accounts illustrate how diagnosis unsettles these norms, positioning women outside dominant reproductive narratives and generating a sense of dislocation from the anticipated “mother and baby” trajectory. This is further negotiated within everyday social interactions, where women encounter subtle pressures to maintain composure and optimism, constraining the expression of grief, fear and uncertainty. The findings highlight how gendered norms are reproduced relationally, shaping how women’s experiences are recognised, responded to, or rendered invisible. In navigating these dynamics, participants engage in ongoing identity work, managing both their own experiences and others’ expectations within a context that privileges normative reproductive outcomes. By critically examining the cultural ideal of the “good pregnancy,” this article contributes to feminist scholarship by foregrounding the exclusionary effects of normative expectations and advocating for more inclusive understandings of pregnancy that accommodate disruption, ambiguity and diverse lived realities..

PREGNANCY

WOMEN

ANOMALY

REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT



B

Boviatsis, Spyros and Leontsini, Mary

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Everyone (not) invited: Gender, family, and childhood in Greek parliamentary debates on civil partnerships for same-sex couples

From 'vulnerable' children and women to queers that put Greek society 'at risk', and from 'normal' families to the 'erosion' of tradition, public discourse in Greece between 2008 and 2024 has been saturated with contested meanings around gender, family, and childhood. Public debates were often triggered by proposed bills related to the basic demands of the Greek LGBTQ+ community, which directly concerned the institution of the family, kinship, and the rights of minors in relation to stigmatized identities.

Such bills included civil partnership legislation (2008 & 2015), legal gender recognition (2017), foster parenthood (2018), the ban on conversion therapies (2022), the ban on intersex genital mutilation (2022), and marriage equality (2024). Based on the analysis of two fundamental parliamentary discussions — the introduction of a civil partnership bill that excluded same-sex couples (2008) and the expansion of civil partnerships to include same-sex couples (2015) — this paper examines how Greek politicians construct, negotiate and weaponize these meanings.

What does a 'real' family look like and what is at stake when discussing diverse forms of kinship? What concerns surface when queerness is discussed in relation to children, whose figure functions as a central symbol of the future of the nation? And how are these issues complicated by dominant meanings of national identity? Through a thematic analysis of the parliamentary minutes and the discourse articulated by political parties, this research traces the convergence of heteronormativity, nationalism and moral panics. Furthermore, it contributes to broader discussions on the intersections of politics, religion, childhood, gender, and sexuality in contemporary Europe.

SAME-SEX COUPLES

KINSHIP

CHILDHOOD

SEXUAL CITIZENSHIP



B

Buckley, Fiona

University College Cork

Reflecting on Legislative Gender Quotas in Ireland

Since the implementation of the legislative gender quota in Ireland, there has been a 186% increase in the number of women contesting general elections and a 76% increase in the number of women elected. However, following the November 2024 general election, three out of every four TDs are still men. Thus, gender parity in descriptive representation is far from being achieved. Research tells us that parties are gatekeepers of candidate selection, and that party behaviour is integral to the effectiveness of gender quotas (Krook 2009; 2016). In this Note from the Field, I highlight that the candidate selection practices of some political parties enable them to meet their obligations under the law, while simultaneously perpetuating and protecting men's candidacies. However, a renewed "sparkling anger" is now being channelled into a campaign to protect and extend the gender quota in an effort to enhance its effectiveness.

GENDER QUOTA

WOMEN CANDIDATES

CANDIDATE SELECTION

PARTY GATEKEEPING

GENDER PARITY



B

Bühring, Lisa

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Performing 'Successful Ageing': How Hollywood's Geriaction Films Repackage Gendered Power and Sexualised Embodiment for a Neoliberal Era

This paper analyses how Hollywood geriaction films — specifically *The Expendables* trilogy and *R.E.D.* — construct ageing through tightly gendered and sexualised norms that reinforce, rather than challenge, dominant cultural power structures. The paper demonstrates that these films integrate older protagonists only under the condition that their bodies conform to neoliberal expectations of autonomy, productivity, and continuous self-discipline. As a result, ageing becomes narratively acceptable only when it is performed as a form of bodily optimisation that sustains existing gender and sexual hierarchies.

The paper argues that geriaction cinema incorporates seemingly progressive elements — such as older women in action roles or older men acknowledging vulnerability — while neutralising their disruptive potential. Older femininity is framed as competent only when paired with heterosexual desirability, emotional labour, and aesthetic control. Older masculinity remains anchored in hyper-competence, physical dominance, and the uninterrupted performance of heterosexual agency. Non-heteronormative or non-binary forms of ageing embodiment are entirely excluded.

The analysis shows that these films do not expand representations of gender, sexuality, or ageing; instead, they recentre neoliberal norms that valorise self-managed, attractive, and sexually legible bodies. By demanding that older characters "age successfully" according to marketable and heteronormative standards, geriaction films reproduce restrictive cultural narratives about whose bodies are permitted to age visibly — and on what terms.

NEOLIBERALISM

MASCULINITY

SUCCESSFUL AGEING

GERIACTION



B

Buyantueva, Radzhana

Université libre de Bruxelles

Online LGBTQ+ activism in Eastern Europe

While scholarship on post-Soviet activism, including those analyzing online activism in separate post-Soviet states, is rapidly growing, there is still a lack of systematic comparative research on online activism in the region. This gap is especially noticeable concerning the comparative analysis of online LGBTQ+ activism across post-Soviet states with different socio-political trajectories. This omission is striking because LGBTQ+ activists in the region have increasingly prioritized online engagement as the key mode of mobilizing supporters, promoting LGBTQ+ agenda, and publicizing instances and patterns of discrimination. The paper aims to fill in this gap by analyzing how LGBTQ+ activists employ social media depending on local socio-political environments in Eastern Europe.

The focus of the analysis is Estonia, Russia, and Ukraine. These countries present interesting cases for the comparative examination of online LGBTQ+ activism. On the one hand, all three countries are impacted by the legacy of Soviet homophobia. On the other hand, these states display radically different socio-political trajectories over the post-Soviet period, which have created very different opportunities and constraints for LGBTQ+ activists. They have also adopted different approaches to censorship and the freedom of online communication.

The paper adopts social movement theories and recent advances in political communication (strategic narrative approach) to examine the use of social media by LGBTQ+ Estonians, Russians, and Ukrainians. It explores how local social and political contexts affect discourses and narratives used by LGBTQ+ activists online in these countries.

LGBTQ+

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

STRATEGIC NARRATIVES

ESTONIA

RUSSIA

UKRAINE



C

Camilleri, Franica

University of Malta

Like a Wildflower: The Lived Experience of Women, Survivors of Domestic Violence, Who Battled Separation in Court

This doctoral research, undertaken within the Department of Gender and Sexuality at the University of Malta, investigates the lived experiences of women survivors of domestic violence during separation proceedings in the Maltese Family Court. The study stems from a personal and academic commitment to explore how institutional systems, particularly the court process, may unintentionally perpetuate harm against survivors. Drawing on feminist theory (FST) and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), the research adopts a qualitative approach to examine survivor narratives and the socio-legal structures that shape their experiences.

At this stage, the literature review and methodology chapters have been completed, offering critical insight into the gaps in both academic discourse and institutional practices surrounding domestic violence and legal separation. Early findings from the literature suggest a lack of trauma-informed responses and a pressing need for culturally sensitive support mechanisms within the justice system. The upcoming empirical phase of this study will involve in-depth interviews to further understand and amplify the voices of women navigating these complex legal and emotional landscapes.

IPV

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

FAMILY COURT

FST

IPA



C

Castillo, Tatiana and Alvarez, Miguel

Southern Illinois University of Carbondale

Redefining crisis of masculinity: Institutional Reconfiguration and Gender Regimes in Latin America

The article examines how traditional masculine identities in Latin America and the Caribbean have entered into crisis as a result of advances in the women's human rights and the transformations driven by feminist movements, international legal frameworks, and gender equality policies. It argues that this crisis cannot be understood solely as an internal process of identity destabilization, but rather as an urgent call to re-signify men's roles and the social expectations associated with gender in order to build more just and equitable environments.

The analysis is grounded in the premise that women's human rights constitute a collective responsibility — and therefore also a matter for men. In this sense, the transformation of masculinities is presented as a necessary condition not only for the full exercise of women's rights, but also for challenging patriarchal structures that have historically constrained both women and men.

The research employs a qualitative methodology that combines a review of academic literature and an analysis of normative documents related with gender, women rights and masculinities. This approach enables a critical reflection on current tensions, and the challenges men face in redefining their identities. To contextualize the discussion, the article highlights key historical moments related to women's rights advancements and the institutionalization of equality policies in the region. It concludes by proposing the promotion of inclusive dialogues and processes of re-signification that foster the emergence of new masculinities. Such transformations not only expand women's opportunities to fully exercise their rights, but also generate benefits for men themselves, paving the way for more equitable, supportive, and sustainable forms of coexistence.

MASCULINITIES

WOMEN RIGHTS

EQUALITY

GENDER

MACHISMO



C

Chraiki, Noure, Ibrouk, Aomar and Chraiki Abderrahim

FSJES UCA Marrakech

Impact of Harassment on the Migration Aspirations of Female Medical Students in Morocco

Gender-based harassment is a recognized yet insufficiently studied reality across the medical education pathway in Morocco. While its prevalence has been acknowledged, its effects on female medical students' academic performance, motivation, and migration intentions remain underexplored. This study investigates how gender-based harassment shapes the academic trajectories and future aspirations of Moroccan female medical students.

An exploratory qualitative design was adopted. Between January and June 2025, 40 semi-structured interviews were conducted with female medical students enrolled in medical faculties in Agadir, Rabat, Casablanca, and Tangier. Participants, aged 19 to 26 and ranging from the first to the seventh year of medical training, were recruited through purposeful sampling via student networks, online groups, and peer referrals. The interview guide explored motivations for pursuing medical studies, academic and professional challenges, experiences of gender-based harassment, and migration aspirations. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, anonymized, and analyzed inductively through thematic analysis using NVivo software.

The study seeks to generate a nuanced understanding of the ways gender-based harassment affects students' psychological well-being, academic engagement, and professional outlook. It also examines how such experiences may contribute to the desire to migrate, whether as a strategy of self-protection, professional fulfillment, or escape from discriminatory environments. By linking harassment to both educational and migratory trajectories, this research contributes to ongoing discussions on gender inequality in medical training and its broader consequences for the Moroccan healthcare system.

HARASSMENT

MEDICAL STUDENTS

MIGRATION ASPIRATIONS

MOROCCO

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



C

Cutajar, JosAnn and Thake, Ann Marie

University of Malta

DEI Frameworks and the Persistent Deprioritization of Gender in HR

This study examines how human resource (HR) practitioners enact diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) frameworks within organisational practices in Malta, with particular attention to the persistent marginalisation of gender equity. Focusing on the HR practices implemented in ten companies, it explores how global and European DEI norms are translated into local organisational contexts, and how gender and other intersectional inequalities are unevenly prioritised within these processes. Adopting a qualitative, exploratory design, the study draws on semi-structured interviews with HR practitioners working in companies located across multiple sectors. Data were thematically analysed using Institutional Theory to examine both formal and informal DEI implementation and the tensions shaping HR decision-making. The findings indicate that while organisations formally adopt DEI frameworks addressing recruitment, pay equity, and workplace flexibility, gender equity is frequently subsumed within broader inclusion agendas rather than treated as a distinct strategic priority. HR practitioners play a mediating role in translating policy into practice, often relying on informal mechanisms to compensate for limited structural commitment. The effectiveness of DEI efforts is shaped by leadership support, resource allocation, and local organisational and cultural norms. Gender, alongside disability, nationality, and LGBTIQ+ identities, requires context-specific approaches that are not consistently embedded within existing DEI frameworks. This study highlights how HR practitioners navigate institutional pressures and paradoxical tensions between formal compliance and substantive inclusion. It contributes to DEI scholarship by revealing how gender equity is persistently deprioritised within ostensibly inclusive HR frameworks, and by demonstrating the critical —yet constrained—role of HR mediation in fostering employee trust, engagement, and sustainable organisational inclusion.

HR PRACTITIONERS

DIVERSITY

INCLUSION (DEI)

GENDER

INTERSECTIONALITY



D

Dalli, Amanda

University of Malta

Caught in Between: Insights from Young Men's Experiences of Evolving Gender Roles

Contemporary shifts in gender expectations have generated significant pressures for young men, yet many of them feel that their perspectives remain underrepresented in gender scholarship and policy discourse. This paper examines how men navigate evolving social norms, with particular attention to identity negotiation, emotional wellbeing, and help-seeking behaviours. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with seventeen Maltese men aged between 18 and 35, the study explores their perceptions of changing gender roles and the strategies they employ to manage the ever-evolving demands associated.

Findings reveal persistent internalisation of the breadwinner ideal, even within dual-income households, leading to internal conflict in the face of financial strain and time poverty. Participants described tension between traditional masculine obligations and newer expectations of emotional openness and egalitarian partnership, resulting in heightened psychological stress. Mental health challenges were recurrent, with men expressing reluctance to seek professional support due to stigma, self-reliance norms and some scepticism. Worries regarding institutional responses to male victimisation also emerged, with several participants believing that men reporting intimate partner violence would be dismissed or treated as perpetrators themselves, reflecting broader concerns of gendered bias.

The paper argues that it is crucial for current gender equality frameworks to recognise men's perspectives and distinct vulnerabilities, and that more inclusive approaches are required to cater for their specific needs. Policy recommendations include developing male-friendly mental health pathways, enhancing institutional training on male victimisation, promoting shared financial and caregiving responsibilities, and including men's voices within gender policy design. By drawing attention to men's lived experiences, this study highlights the importance of addressing male wellbeing not only in relation to women's rights, but as an integral component in its own right towards holistic and sustainable gender equality. The findings have implications for policymakers and scholars seeking to understand and support men amid shifting gender landscapes.

MASCULINITIES

EVOLVING GENDER ROLES

MEN'S WELLBEING

HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR



D

Dalli, Nicholas and Vassallo, Diane

University of Malta

A Conceptualisation of a STEM-history pedagogical approach towards the teaching of the construction and performance of gender

Modern pedagogies and educational policies in Malta and elsewhere have been marked by a clear turn towards inclusivity (King et. al., 2000; MEYR, 2022a; MEYR, 2022b). The attempt has been made to consider, appreciate, and respect the diversities present in the student-body and society-at-large when developing and performing in-class pedagogies, school-wide programs, and government policies (Borg Saliba & Vella, 2023). Despite these efforts, gender non-conforming and transgender students continue to feel othered by peers, teachers, syllabi, and the educational system (Namaste, 2000; Singer, 2001).

Curricula and educational policies have been critiqued for reproducing heteronormative, middle-class ideals (Farrugia, 1991). Considering, as Judith Butler (1990) has opined, that gender is mediated by, constructed in relation to, and performed within society, any such society developed within these heteronormative ideals will continue to other queer students.

This paper will outline a conceptual-pedagogical framework which envisages presenting students with the opportunity to engage with nuanced, empathy-oriented, and historically-contextualised case-studies (Barton & Levstik, 2004) that showcase examples of the construction and performance of gender within the society of Hospitaller Malta. This time period is awash with historical characters that illustrate the fluidity behind the construction and performance of both normative and transgressive gender identities (Buttigieg, 2009). These interventions would leverage the transferable skills related to historical empathy, characterised by an appreciation of the socio-cultural circumstances which inform individuals' beliefs and actions (Briffa, 1998), to present students with the opportunity to consider the Butlerian social-gender paradigm through a moralistic lens. Moreover, it is envisaged that students will consider these case-studies by interacting with Custom GPTs. These GPTs would be developed through OpenAI's GPT Builder and fine-tuned with a relevant literary corpus derived from peer-reviewed academic materials (Jaskari, 2024/2025). The linguistic and dialogic components of ChatGPT (Famaye et. al. 2024) will be leveraged to couch the above-mentioned socio-moralistic and historical-empathetic learning outcomes within a relevant STEM-oriented pedagogical context. It is hoped that this will contribute to the formation of an ethically-, historically-, and scientifically-literate active citizenry geared towards the inclusion of the other.

HISTORY PEDAGOGY

GENDER CONSTRUCTION

GENDER PERFORMANCE

STEM EDUCATION

GENAI



D

Daly, Carla

SETU, Waterford

From Formation to Flashpoint: Gender Identity Policy in a New University

This presentation reflects on my experience contributing to the development of the Gender Identity and Expression Policy at South East Technological University (SETU), Ireland. As an LGBT+ lecturer involved in equality and inclusion work within the institution, my motivation for engaging in this process emerged from both personal commitment to LGBT+ rights, and a recognition that the existing institutional policy did not go far enough in providing clear guidance or meaningful support for transgender, non-binary, and gender-diverse staff and students. Rather than presenting the policy solely as a formal institutional document, this short talk approaches its development as a story told through moments, artefacts, and reactions. Drawing on media headlines, and visual material that circulated during the policy's introduction, the presentation explores how efforts to strengthen and expand institutional guidance around gender identity became the subject of public attention and controversy. Particular attention will be given to the cultural tensions that emerged during this process. These include media narratives about pronouns and gender identity, moments of institutional resistance and acquiescence, and the ways in which symbolic gestures, such as the commissioning of a hostile artwork by a staff member became part of the broader conversation surrounding the policy. Through this narrative approach, the presentation reflects on the often invisible emotional labour involved in equality work within universities and considers how institutional policies can become cultural flashpoints far beyond the administrative processes through which they are created.

GENDER IDENTITY

INSTITUTIONAL POLICY

LGBT+ INCLUSION

MEDIA CONTROVERSY

EMOTIONAL LABOUR



D

Deguara, Angele

Junior College - University of Malta

The human cost of HIV Stigma: The experience of gay men living with HIV in Malta

HIV Stigma, which refers to the negative social perceptions of people living with HIV based primarily on their HIV status, is perhaps the major challenge faced by gay men living with HIV in Maltese society nowadays. Unlike other diagnoses such as cancer or diabetes, which tend to draw sympathy and care, HIV continues to be one of the most stigmatised health conditions in Malta and across the world, forcing those living with HIV to carry the heavy burden on their own in silence.

This presentation discusses the experiences of nine gay men, five Maltese and four non-Maltese living with HIV in Malta and how the misconceptions, the silence and the stigma surrounding HIV impact their everyday lives, their relationships with family, friends, colleagues, healthcare professionals and lovers. Especially when internalised, stigma causes a great deal of anxiety and shame in gay men diagnosed with HIV, especially if they lack a sound support structure. Furthermore, when HIV stigma intersects with other stigmatising factors such as homosexuality, the impact is worse. Gay men living with HIV would have already had to deal with the stigma related to their sexual orientation and with the ordeal of coming out. The persistent link between HIV and homosexuality does not make things easier, especially in the absence of lack of knowledge about the virus, its transmission and recent developments in its treatment.

Stigma renders HIV invisible. Despite the relatively high rate of HIV diagnoses in Malta, the silence about HIV is deafening. This makes disclosure to family, friends, colleagues or lovers a delicate matter fraught with difficulties and dilemmas about who to tell, where, when, how and to what extent one should be open about one's predicament.

HIV

STIGMA

GAY MEN

MALTA

SILENCE



D

Dekhankhodjaeva Fenech, Makhbuba, Charles, John and Tonna, Danica

Gender Adjustment in Legislature: Highlights, Successes and Challenges in the Maltese Context

The Gender Corrective Mechanism was introduced in Malta in 2021 to tackle gender inequality within the legislature. Since its inception, it has faced both praise and criticism within the political and public spheres. This paper seeks to explore the impact that the policy has in parliamentary participation by comparing the rate of participation of women MPs in key months in 2019 and 2024. This is achieved through content analysis, specifically content analysis of frequency of language and magnitude coding, through which an understanding is gained on general trends of topics discussed and most importantly the rate of frequency of participation. Results showed that the rate of participation of women MPs has increased significantly in 2024, beyond what was expected from the increased number of seats. In the resulting differences in discourse and frequency of participation after the implementation of this policy, the contribution of affirmative action policies in decision making roles is highlighted.

GENDER CORRECTIVE MECHANISM

MALTA

PARLIAMENTARY PARTICIPATION

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION



D

Dibben, Andreana

University of Malta

From Ripple to Wave: The Genesis of Malta's Pro-Choice Movement (2016–2019)

This paper explores the formative years of the contemporary abortion rights movement in Malta (2016–2019), a pivotal period marked by the successful introduction of the Morning After Pill (MAP) and the establishment of a formal pro-choice coalition, culminating in the country's first public rally for abortion rights. Methodologically, this paper employs an autoethnographic approach, positioning the researcher's personal participation as the Chairperson of the Women's Rights Foundation (WRF), and critical self-reflexivity as the primary lens for analysing complex socio-political phenomena. This is supplemented by insights from interviews with key actors and analysis of media coverage, including the author's and other activists' active engagement in public discussions. The research is theoretically framed by concepts of reproductive governance to analyse the institutional control over bodily autonomy, and reproductive justice to assess the movement's strategy of ensuring access and equity.

The analysis traces the movement's strategic evolution and historical milestones, including the successful 2016 judicial protest for the Morning After Pill, the launch of Women's Rights Foundation's position paper, international learning missions to Ireland and Portugal, and grassroots mobilisation such as value clarification workshops with Catholics for Choice, and the founding of Doctors for Choice and Voice for Choice.

Central to the research is the critical examination of the challenges of front-line leadership in Malta's restrictive, Catholic context. The paper investigates the hostility and public scrutiny that accompanied this advocacy, contrasting it with the collective resilience required to sustain and grow the movement. Ultimately, this study documents the growth strategies that transformed the discourse on reproductive rights from a suppressed issue into a visible, social movement, offering critical lessons for feminist and broader movement-building in restrictive contexts.

ABORTION RIGHTS

REPRODUCTIVE GOVERNANCE

COALITION-BUILDING

REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

MALTA



D

Doležalová, Barbora Skalická

Charles University

Sex Work, BDSM, and the Power of Belonging: Between Anti-Capitalist Subversion and Neoliberal "Being Your Own Boss"

Sex workers remain among the most marginalized groups in society, routinely denied rights, citizenship, and access to justice. Their own perspectives are often absent from public debates on their labour and political representation (West 2025), even as their bodies and identities circulate with increasing visibility in contemporary media. Sex work continues to oscillate between fascination and condemnation — a dynamic equally present in public attitudes toward BDSM cultures. While recent scholarship has begun to engage more seriously with working conditions and labour politics in sex work, discussions still overwhelmingly foreground sexuality rather than work (Berg 2014).

In state-socialist Czechoslovakia, sex workers were officially labelled "social parasites" and criminalized for failing to contribute to socialist collective labour (Brenner 2021). After 1989, the law on parasitism was abolished and both sexual tourism and everyday sexual consumption expanded rapidly (Gjuričová 2011). Yet sex workers' legal and social status remains ambivalent: they are neither recognized as workers with rights nor regulated by any specific national legislation.

In the post-socialist context, where unions and collective action are still burdened by associations with compulsory socialist-era participation, this research examines how sex workers negotiate their position within an environment shaped simultaneously by sex workers' desires for community and by neoliberal pressures toward individualization, competition, and self-reliance. How do sex workers understand their labour and their position within capitalist patriarchy? What everyday strategies of mutual aid do they develop to stay safe, resist police surveillance, navigate gendered power dynamics, and maintain viable incomes without being pushed out of the profession? This research also revisits the empowerment/oppression binary and critically examines the slogan "sex work is work" through the lens of anti-work and post-work theories. Using participatory action methods, over 25 interviews were conducted with sex workers with experience in the Czech Republic, including four dominatrix practitioners and five individuals who entered sex work through BDSM communities.

SEX WORK

BDSM

COMMUNITY BUILDING

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

CZECH REPUBLIC



D

Doyle, Mark

SETU, Ireland

Queering Consent in Irish Sexual Healthcare Services

Technological and bio-medical developments have dramatically altered the sexual cultures of gbMSM (Race, 2015, 2018; Tziallas, 2015; Hakim, 2019; Phillips et al., 2021). As sexual cultures and practices evolve, methods of communicating consent vary, from verbal to non-verbal and are often context-dependent, differing across cruising sites, sex-on-premises venues, private settings, and online platforms. While the sexual cultures of gbMSM are dynamic, healthcare systems often remain static spaces in which heteronormative discourses shape service provision and referral pathways for gbMSM who have experienced non-consensual sexual activity or IPV. These institutional logics reinforce gendered assumptions about masculinity, sexual agency, and vulnerability, potentially compounding harm and limiting access to appropriate support. Additionally, patriarchal norms and dominant constructions of masculinity — alongside internalised homophobia and stigma — profoundly shape how gbMSM experience, interpret, and disclose issues of consent and IPV (Stephenson et al., 2022).

This paper examines the complexities of sexual consent among gbMSM within Irish healthcare settings, drawing on focus groups with clinical and community professionals working in sexual health and wellbeing services. Clinical and community-based professionals in the study expressed concern about a lack of culturally competent support services, noting that current frameworks often fail to address the specific needs of GBMSM, particularly those involved in chemsex or experiencing IPV. Participants advocated for public health campaigns and provider training rooted in queer-informed approaches, the development of culturally competent support services, and revisions to legal definitions and educational curricula to better reflect the diverse realities of gbMSM. Findings underscore the need for inclusive sexual education and healthcare policy reforms that transcend heteronormative definitions of consent. The paper calls for intersectional and queer approaches to healthcare that enhance outcomes for gbMSM and provide more comprehensive frameworks for understanding and negotiating sexual consent.

GBMSM CONSENT

QUEER HEALTHCARE

CHEMSEX IPV

SEXUAL CULTURES

POLICY REFORMS



D

Doyle, Mark and O'Mahoney, Jennifer

SETU, Ireland

Navigating Disclosures and Care for gbMSM who have experienced Non Consensual Sexual Activity: Clinical and Community Perspectives on Service and Policy Gaps

Heteronormative policy and service design often fails to reflect the complex realities in which sexual consent is experienced and negotiated by gbMSM. This study explores how practitioners understand and address consent in their work, and how policy and health systems frequently exclude populations of gbMSM. Data was collected between September and October 2024 from two focus groups (n=4x2; seven male, one female) with clinical and community-based sexual health professionals in Ireland.

Practitioners described consent as relational and shaped by stigma, trauma, and structural exclusion. Findings call for trauma-informed, community-informed models embedded in policy to support meaningful disclosure and culturally competent care. Three main themes emerged:

1 Systemic gaps and structural barriers to consent support

Including fragmented referrals and abstinence-based models that undermine effective care.

2 Consent, disclosure, and the limits of trauma-informed care

Highlighting how limited time, training, and support restrict practitioners' ability to respond to trauma.

3 Consent and contexts

Where consent was seen as fluid and shaped by context, including chemsex, apps, and an evolving field of bio-medical intervention.

GBMSM CONSENT

NON-CONSENSUAL CARE

TRAUMA-INFORMED MODELS

CHEMSEX CONTEXTS

POLICY GAPS



F

Finlay, Hazel

SETU Waterford

The Work of Equality: Stories of Labour, Resistance and Solidarity in University Life

This presentation offers a reflective account of equality work within a contemporary new university through a series of short narrative “moments” drawn from lived institutional experience. Speaking from my role as a Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI) Branch Equality Officer at South East Technological University (SETU) in Waterford, Ireland, I explore the labour, relationships, and tensions that shape equality work in everyday academic life.

My engagement with equality work emerges from both professional and personal pathways. As a Social Care lecturer with seventeen years’ experience, my earlier work supporting adults with intellectual disabilities and young people in care shaped my understanding of equality, vulnerability, and social justice. These experiences continue to inform my approach to equality work within both the university and the trade union.

When I volunteered to become a TUI Equality Officer, I thought I was stepping into a role. What I did not realise was that I was stepping into a journey. A journey that would introduce me to people across the entire university; people I might never otherwise have met. Slowly, through this work, those professional connections became something else: a community. What began as institutional work became relational practices of institutional change, creating connections between union members, equality structures, and colleagues across the university.

Structured as a sequence of “moments” the presentation reflects on different dimensions of institutional equality work: becoming a union Equality Officer; the emotional and ethical labour involved in drafting sexual misconduct policies; the role of trade union structures as spaces for dialogue and collective action; the networks of women and colleagues who sustain equality initiatives across institutional settings; and the resistance and politicisation that can emerge around gender equality and LGBTQ+ inclusion. In doing so, the presentation reflects on equality work as slow, relational labour within institutional structures. It highlights how institutional change is often shaped not only through formal policies and strategies, but through the everyday interactions, relationships, and communities of practice that emerge, and how these communities can gradually and meaningfully influence institutional culture and university life.

EQUALITY WORK

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

RELATIONAL LABOUR

TRADE UNION

UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY



G

Galea, Emily

University of Malta

Femicide Fatality Reviews in Malta: An Action Research Study

This doctoral study involves developing a localised process for femicide fatality reviews, and conducting a select amount of those reviews using this process. This is being done with the aim of developing policy recommendations that may contribute to the prevention of femicide, and is in collaboration with the Malta Observatory on Femicide.

This review process involves conducting approximately 1-hour long, in-depth interviews with the stakeholders of each case, including: police, social workers, family members, and those who may have critically interacted with the victim in the lead up to the femicide. It is a qualitative study, and uses Action Research as the main methodology, while Feminist Interpretative Phenomenology (IPA) is used to analyse the data. The primary purpose of the reviews is to identify whether there could have been a point of intervention that may have prevented the femicide. These methodologies will be used to explore and analyse the societal structures surrounding the issue of femicide, and how they are expressed in system responses.

Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, various precautions have been taken in order to ensure the safety and confidentiality of the interviews. Furthermore, taking a feminist approach throughout the study has meant prioritising the experiences of marginalised groups as well as acknowledging existing patriarchal structures. The literature review and methodology have been completed thus far, which has included compiling a multitude of literature and reports related to the topic of femicide and domestic homicide reviews, as well as the construction of a robust methodological structure to best support the reviews and participants. This has created a strong foundation for the study, which is inherently valuable to the field for its understanding and contextualising of femicide and fatality reviews.

CARE WORKERS

FEMICIDE

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



G

Genovese, Nadine

Institute for Education, Malta

The IfE Culture Blueprint: Integrating Gender Equality, Wellbeing, and Talent Retention

The Institute of Education (IfE) Culture Blueprint is an institution-wide framework designed to advance gender equality, staff wellbeing, and talent retention. It integrates three strategic documents - the Gender Equality Plan (GEP) 2023–2025, the GEP 2026–2030, and the Wellness & Step-Up Plan 2026 - into a cohesive approach to fostering an inclusive and high-performing organisational culture. Grounded in the principles of non-discrimination, diversity, gender mainstreaming, and equity, it is overseen by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee and operates as a dynamic, evolving commitment.

The GEP 2023–2025 established priorities across five key areas, including work-life balance, leadership representation, recruitment and progression, gender in research and teaching, and measures addressing gender-based violence. A progress review identified significant achievements, such as the implementation of gender-neutral practices, organisation-wide training, and the elimination of pay inequities. Building on this foundation, the GEP 2026–2030 broadens its scope to reflect wider dimensions of diversity and aligns with European policy frameworks. Key actions include inclusive leadership initiatives, bias-aware recruitment processes, and mandatory training in areas such as unconscious bias and bystander intervention. Complementing this, the Wellness Plan 2026 delivers a structured programme supporting mental, physical, and social wellbeing as part of staff engagement and retention. Overall, the IfE Culture Blueprint demonstrates how aligning equality strategies with wellbeing initiatives can support a more inclusive and sustainable workplace.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

STAFF WELLBEING

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP



G

Grima, Nathalie

University of Malta

Resilient Intimacies: Comparing the Support Networks of Sengleani and Syrian Women in Malta

Gender inequalities, including the gender pay gap, unequal division of labour in the domestic environment, and a prevailing patriarchal mentality surrounding motherhood, have gained prominence in global political discourse and activism. In Malta, while women with higher educational qualifications often access more stable or family-friendly employment, those with fewer qualifications face precarious work or remain outside the paid labour force. This educational disadvantage produces a compounded gender employment gap which is further intensified by intersecting ethnic identities. Collectively, these factors mean that the cultural valorisation of 'ideal mothering' (Borg, 2021) is particularly restrictive, as limited educational credentials reduce women's leverage in negotiating workplace demands and heighten their economic vulnerability (Borg, 2021; Cutajar, 2009).

This comparative qualitative study examines the experiences of low-income women from two communities in Malta: Maltese residents of Senglea and Syrian migrant women. It explores how participants conceptualise and enact resilience while navigating household leadership and caregiving responsibilities under conditions of economic constraint.

Findings indicate that despite structural barriers to economic independence, women in both groups cultivate resilience through women-centred support networks and influential intergenerational or peer relationships. These intimate micro-level interactions — marked by reciprocal understanding and practical assistance in the face of institutional shortcomings — serve as critical sources of emotional and material support. Although gendered support networks appear, at first glance, to align with locally specific family configurations — matrilineal patterns among Sengleani families and patriarchally organised kinship structures within Syrian households — the analysis demonstrates that women across both contexts actively negotiate, reinterpret, and at times unsettle patriarchal expectations. This negotiation emerges as a central dimension of resilience, underscoring how intimate support networks function simultaneously as protective spaces and potential sites of transformation.

RESILIENCE IN LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

INTIMATE SPACES

SENGLANI WOMEN

SYRIAN WOMEN IN MALTA

SUPPORT NETWORKS



G

Grima, Tyrone

MCAST

Borma Tbaqbaq – Il-Lingwa tal-Kċina: *Postcolonialism and the oppression of women*

Borma Tbaqbaq is a research project based on the theatrical work created by Valeria Buhagiar (Maltese-Canadian director of the film *Carmen*), Angele Galea and Pauline Fenech. The plotline of the play centres on a man, accused of having killed a young girl in Malta. A Canadian lawyer of Maltese origins is flown into Malta to defend the case, revisiting issues of deep intergenerational trauma in the process.

The concept idea behind this practice-as-research project on feminist theatre is to uncover further the parallels between colonialism and oppression of women, using theatre as an effective and safe tool. The patterns of oppression to 'control' women is a mirror of how colonialism works, and we are still under its influence. The stripping away of identity, self-pride and confidence of oppressed women happens through a gnawing narrative that is both toxic and inhumane, leaving a husk of what once was a beautiful, well-adjusted woman.

This feminist theatre piece highlights a number of pertinent and pressing issues. Theatre is the perfect vehicle to portray and explore abuse of power and put a spotlight on the contribution and the value women enrich our societies with. The above-mentioned intergenerational wounds, compounded and drilled into our communities by colonialism and patriarchy, need to be exposed and faced before they ever be overcome and healed. The communal experience that is offered to an audience watching this explained to them on stage is very powerful and can help in bringing change. Research through theatre gives the opportunity for in-depth questioning that arises from analysing different audience interactions. The project aims to produce a work that transcends our experience as Maltese but touches the heart of an international problem we still see around us — the taking of land from others, the audacity to strip others from their rights and seeing others as less, and the outright killing of others. Such investigative theatre sheds further light on the lack of equal representation.

POSTCOLONIALISM

THEATRE

PATRIARCHY



H

Heffernan, Valerie

Maynooth University

Representing Maternal Regret: Artistic and Cultural Engagements with a Taboo of Motherhood

The publication of Israeli sociologist Orna Donath's study 'Regretting motherhood: a sociopolitical analysis' in 2015 confirmed that, despite social and cultural assumptions to the contrary, there are women who admit to regretting the decision to become a mother. Donath's innovative work generated a media backlash and provoked a number of follow-up studies in several other countries. It has also inspired a number of cultural and artistic engagements with the idea of maternal regret, and it is these that will be the focus of my paper. I consider two artistic representations of regret: Dutch filmmaker Milou Gevers' documentary short *Spijtmoeders* [Regretful Mothers, 2024] and German circus collective Still Hungry's performance *Raven* (2018). My paper analyses the different approaches to representing regret in these two cultural products and reflects on what art and culture can contribute to our understanding of this taboo topic.

MATERNAL REGRET

MOTHERHOOD

SOCIOPOLITICAL ANALYSIS

TABOO

ARTISTIC REPRESENTATION



H

Hninou, Sanaa, Chraiki Noure and Ibrouk Aomar

Université Cadi Ayyad

The impact of physical violence on female labour force participation: The case of Morocco

Physical violence represents a critical public health and human rights issue with significant effects on women's decision-making regarding employment. Despite its importance, there is a notable lack of scholarly literature examining the relationship between physical violence and Female Labor Force Participation (FLFP). This study aims to fill this gap by exploring how physical violence impacts FLFP among economically active women in Morocco.

Previous research highlights the complex relationship between violence and labor force participation. Some studies suggest that education and recent experiences of physical violence may positively influence FLFP, while others indicate that lifetime experiences of violence could negatively affect FLFP. Utilizing survey data from 721 economically active women in Morocco, the study employs binomial logit analysis to investigate these dynamics.

The methodology involves analyzing survey responses to identify patterns and correlations between education, experiences of physical violence, and FLFP. The findings suggest that educational attainment significantly enhances labor market participation, while recent experiences of physical violence may compel women to seek employment as a means of economic coping. In contrast, lifetime experiences of violence appear to deter women from participating in the labor market due to persistent psychological and physical impacts. These results highlight the necessity for targeted interventions to address the intersection of physical violence and women's labor market participation. Raising awareness of the economic consequences of violence and providing support services for survivors can help create a more supportive environment for women's empowerment and economic independence. Additionally, improving access to education for women in Morocco is crucial to mitigating the negative effects of violence on FLFP. Overall, this study enhances understanding of the complex interplay between physical violence and FLFP, emphasizing the need for comprehensive approaches to address gender-based violence and promote women's economic empowerment.

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

FEMALE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

MOROCCO

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



J

Jovanovska, Bojana and Petrovska, Elena

From Heteronormativity to Governance: An Intersectional, Structural-Violence, and Feminist-Institutionalist Study of LBQ Violence in Four Western Balkan States

This paper builds on the first comprehensive study in the Western Balkans of how gender-based violence (GBV) frameworks in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Serbia address, and systematically erase, the experiences of lesbian, bisexual and queer (LBQ) women and non-binary people. Drawing on intersectional feminist, queer and lesbian feminist approaches to structural violence, lesbophobia and data invisibility and using the Istanbul Convention as a normative benchmark, the study analyzed laws, strategies, GREVIO report and institutional documentation alongside focus groups with LBQ and women's rights organizations.

The findings show that, across all four contexts, domestic violence is prioritised while family-based violence, same-sex intimate partner violence, corrective practices and anti-LBQ hate crimes remain legally and statistically invisible. References to "vulnerable groups" and LGBTIQ communities in national gender equality and LGBTIQ strategies rarely translate into resourced, implementable measures, with CSOs effectively substituting for the state in protection, accompaniment and data collection. Weak implementation, fragmented coordination, underfunded services and growing anti-gender mobilisation further deepen inequalities in access to justice, safety, health and housing for LBQ survivors.

The paper argues that the systematic omission of LBQ women from GBV frameworks constitutes a form of structural and datafied violence and a continuation of historical injustice. The paper outlines practical entry points for protection, prevention and inclusive data systems and discusses what this invisibility reveals about gender, sexuality and institutional power.

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

LBQ WOMEN

INSTITUTIONAL INVISIBILITY

WESTERN BALKANS

DATAFIED VIOLENCE



K

Kriston, Edit

University of Miskolc

Hiding behind the children's backs: Current Legal Regulations Affecting the LGBTQ Community in Hungary

Hungarian legal regulation can be considered extremely traditional; the socio-historical roots support the legal protection of traditional values. However, in the last few decades, a global change has begun, one element of which is the expansion and recognition of LGBTQ communities' rights. Hungary is a member of the European Union. Hence, the recognition and adoption of these rights are even more desirable, as the topic also receives special attention in EU strategies. In many cases, the Hungarian legislator tries to avoid the need to develop legal regulations to resolve the contradiction. The presentation discusses where the effects of international changes can be observed despite this approach, what legislative changes would reverse this trend and cause a roller-coaster effect, and how the social approach has changed recently in Hungary.

HUNGARIAN LEGAL TRADITION

VALUES PROTECTION

LGBTQ RIGHTS RECOGNITION

LEGISLATIVE

SOCIAL CHANGE



L

LeBlanc, Jillian and Nasri, Raounak

Lingering colonialism in the Women Peace and Security Agenda

This paper will examine the persistent colonial legacies embedded within the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda and argues that its continued Eurocentric orientation undermines its legitimacy, effectiveness, and acceptance in the Global South. While WPS was conceived as a transformative framework for advancing gender-responsive peace and security, its implementation remains shaped by institutions, funding structures, and policy approaches rooted in eurocentric epistemologies. These dynamics often position women as a homogenous category, overlook diverse intersectional experiences, and can reproduce unequal power relations between "designers" and "recipients" of WPS interventions. As a result, many actors in the Global South perceive WPS as externally imposed and insufficiently responsive to their diverse sociopolitical realities, thus leading to a failure of WPS implementation programming.

Rather than proposing to place or shift blame on one actor, this paper applies existing feminist and decolonial scholarship to illuminate these tensions and offer constructive pathways forward. Drawing on Charlesworth, Chinkin, and Wright's feminist approaches to international law, Pinto and Nash's analysis of feminism's "bad objects," and Third World Approaches to International Law (TWAIL) articulated by Mutua and Anghie, the paper identifies how well-intentioned WPS actors may inadvertently perpetuate the very structures they seek to dismantle. The analysis situates these critiques within the broader context of EU policy and examines the European Council as a case study to demonstrate how institutional practices can reinforce or challenge colonial patterns in WPS implementation. At a time when more than 600 million women and girls are affected by conflict, a 50 percent increase in a decade, reframing WPS through decolonial, feminist, and TWAIL-informed perspectives is both urgent and necessary. This paper argues for an inclusive, context-driven, and co-creative approach to Euro-Arab cooperation that elevates Global South and Indigenous contributions, ultimately strengthening the transformative potential of the WPS agenda.

WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY (WPS)

DECOLONIAL FEMINISM

TWAIL

EUROCENTRISM

SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND POWER



L

Lengyel, Artúr

Triagon Academy

"A Place to Be Ourselves": A Qualitative Exploration of Identity, Community, and Safety for LGBTIQ+ Amateur Athletes at European Sport Events

Mainstream sport environments are often characterized by pervasive heteronormativity and cisnormativity, creating barriers for LGBTIQ+ individuals (Gil-Quintana et al., 2022; Lahti et al., 2024; Pride Sports, 2016; Outsport, 2020). Major LGBTIQ+ sport events like the Eurogames and Gay Games function as crucial "alternative spaces" designed to be inclusive (Smiler et al., 2021). However, there is a research gap concerning the in-depth, lived experiences and identity management of the diverse amateur athletes who attend (European Travel Commission, 2018; Kauhanen, 2015; Smiler et al., 2021). This study addresses this gap through a qualitative exploration of these athletes' tourism experiences. Adopting an interpretivist paradigm, this research aims to explore the lived experiences of LGBTIQ+ amateur athletes, focusing on perceptions of safety, inclusivity, and community formation (cf. Smiler et al., 2021). It also seeks to analyze how participation influences their "identity work" and self-expression (Lahti et al., 2024; Smiler et al., 2021). The methodology involves semi-structured interviews conducted with a purposive sample of athletes from various European countries, ensuring representation across the LGBTIQ+ spectrum, a group often under-represented in research (European Travel Commission, 2018; Gil-Quintana et al., 2022). Data will be analyzed using thematic analysis and narrative analysis (Lahti et al., 2024) to understand how athletes construct their identities and experiences in this unique context. This study will provide rich, nuanced insights into the transformative potential of these events, highlighting their role in fostering community and enabling authentic self-expression (Smiler et al., 2021). Findings will inform actionable recommendations for event organizers and tourism stakeholders to improve inclusivity, moving beyond tokenism to create genuinely affirming environments (cf. Molinie, n.d.; Gil-Quintana et al., 2022).

LGBTIQ+ SPORT TOURISM

IDENTITY WORK,

SAFE SPACES

EUROGAMES

COMMUNITY FORMATION,



L

Lynch, Orla

University College Cork

Victims of political violence; recognition of harm

Victims of political violence have increasingly become a central focus in scholarship on peace processes, cycles of violence, and the broader societal impacts of conflict. Beyond immediate harm to individuals, political violence reshapes communities, institutions, and collective memory. This paper argues that both the experience of victimhood and the legal and socio-legal responses to political violence are profoundly gendered processes.

Focusing on key gendered dimensions of victimhood, the paper examines how “harm” is defined within legal and policy frameworks, often privileging certain forms of violence while marginalising others more commonly experienced by women. It further explores the lived realities of surviving political violence, highlighting the enduring physical, psychological, and socio-economic burdens placed on survivors. Particular attention is given to the disproportionate responsibilities borne by women, who frequently act as caregivers, community stabilisers, and custodians of memory in post-conflict contexts.

By analysing these dynamics, the paper demonstrates how gender shapes recognition, redress, and resilience. It calls for more inclusive and gender-sensitive approaches to addressing political violence, ensuring that diverse experiences of harm and survival are acknowledged within both transitional justice mechanisms and broader peacebuilding efforts.

POLITICAL VIOLENCE

GENDERED VICTIMHOOD

TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

SURVIVORS' LIVED EXPERIENCES

GENDER-SENSITIVE PEACEBUILDING



M

Mallia, Vince

University of Glasgow

The case of male rape: Underfunded, undermanned, and under-resourced organisations helping survivors of male rape

This qualitative study examines the gendered dynamics shaping the provision of support for male rape survivors, focusing on the experiences of professionals working within specialist organisations. Despite growing recognition of male sexual victimisation, the support landscape remains structured around assumptions of sexual violence as a predominantly female experience. This study therefore explores how gendered narratives, institutional logics, and limited material resources intersect to shape professional practice and emotional labour in this under-researched field.

Seven professionals participated in semi-structured, one-to-one interviews comprising open-ended questions. Data were analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis, allowing for a nuanced interpretation of participants' lived experiences and the social meanings that inform their work. Five key themes emerged, illustrating both the structural constraints and affective dimensions of practice. Participants described how technological resources facilitated aspects of their support work, yet also reflected on the strain caused by chronic underfunding and excessive workloads. The findings reveal a gendered contradiction: while participants sought to provide equitable, survivor-centred care, they operated within systems that marginalised male survivors through cultural silences, limited resources, and a lack of institutional recognition.

By drawing on sociological and social psychological frameworks, this study contributes to gender studies by interrogating how masculinities, vulnerability, and care are negotiated within the context of sexual violence support. It argues that professionals' experiences reflect broader tensions within gendered economies of care, where compassion and emotional labour are constrained by institutional neglect and gendered hierarchies of victimhood. In doing so, the research extends current understandings of how gender norms and resource inequalities shape the provision, perception, and practice of support for male rape survivors.

MASCULINITY

MALE RAPE

MOBILISATION OF RESOURCES

ORGANISATIONS

GENDERED CONTRADICTION



M

Mara, Athina

University of Roehampton

Same-sex families perceptions on (in)equality and legal frameworks in Greece

In this paper, Greece is considered as a case study, a Balkan country-nation that holds strong values for sexuality and gender, yet voted for same-sex marriage at the end of 2024. In Greece, when policies attempt to legislate or regulate family relations that, on a theoretical level, question the hegemony of the biologically or genetically determined heteropatriarchal 'blood ties' (as same-sex families do in the social imaginary in Greece), a notable intensification of the essentialist attitudes towards kinship and parenthood is emerging. Those attitudes attempt to defend the dominance of 'traditional' and 'official' cultural conceptualisations of the family. The relationship between gender, parenthood, and kinship takes on socio-emotional standards rather than biological connotations, and becomes a field of conflict, negotiation, and multiple ways of kinship (Kantsa, 2015:370).

In 2024, 60% of the population supported same-sex marriage, whereas only 35.8% endorsed the right of same-sex couples to adopt. Society often does not accept gays and lesbians as parents. This can make them feel isolated and lonely in the future. Because kinship is tied to procreation, in the majority's opinion, pink families cannot be sexually productive and are set apart from the rest of humanity because they choose not to accept heteronormativity (Weston, 1991).

To inquire about the qualitative interaction between institutional change and social acceptance, the paper explores how same-sex families (gay and lesbian parents/couples) perceive societal reactions/acceptance of Law 4356/2015 on the extension of the Civil Partnership Act for same-sex couples; whether institutional changes of 2015 affected the societal reactions/acceptance (RQ1). Moreover, the paper further questions the terms under which the legal recognition of the same sex family and kinship is defined. Does law foresee the differentiated characteristics of queer kinship or normalise the queer forms of livelihood and kinship?

SAME-SEX KINSHIP

SOCIAL PERCEPTION

POLICIES



M

Moissidou, Despina and Grech, Deborah Barts and the London School of Medicine and Dentistry

Queen Mary University of London – Malta Campus

Gender Equality through an Intersectional Framework: QMUL's Gender Impact Plan (2022–2027)

Queen Mary University of London's Gender Impact Plan (2022–2027) presents a structured strategy for advancing gender equality across recruitment, progression, leadership, and institutional culture. Central to the plan is an intersectional approach, recognising that gender inequality is shaped by overlapping factors such as race, ethnicity, disability, and socioeconomic background. It sets measurable targets to improve representation and addresses systemic barriers, while embedding inclusive practices into governance, research, and daily operations. Supported by dedicated oversight and continuous monitoring, the plan reflects the broader Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives, aiming to drive sustained cultural and structural change across the university.

GENDER EQUALITY

INTERSECTIONALITY

POLIINSTITUTIONAL CULTURE

INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE

STRUCTURAL CHANGE



M

Müllenmeister, Clara

University of Bremen

The Fragility of Binary Referential Gender

By definition of their mutually exclusive meaning, binary gender excludes the gender between and beyond. This rigidity is what makes it brittle, fragile and prone to contradiction. Referential speech-acts contain a semantic and a pragmatic layer of reference. While the first refers to a concept, the latter points it to a referent (Hanks, 2019, p. 16), placing the one referred to in the category provided by the concepts. Pronouns (she), but also of nouns with semantic gender (sister) and other gender markers, depending on the language, assign referential gender. Successful reference does not depend on truthfulness or the approval of the one referred to, but on being traced and comprehended by an addressee (Butler, 1997), divergent frameworks of gender assignment being a prevalent cause for conceptual mismatches.

A mistaken reference can be successful, if the addressee shares the conceptual mismatch, or backtracks it (Capone, 2024, p. 35). Since reference presupposes gender and referential gender is binary, references to queer and intersex people involve crises of normativity. According to Latour (2005) functionality is best understood from situations of crisis, breakdown and change. The paper analyses the controversy, insecurity and linguistic innovation provoked by discursive representation of nonbinaryity to what it reveals about normativity. It shows how reference relies on the obviousness of social gender for reference tracking, thus implicitly guardrailing gender expression to fulfilling this requirement. The aspect of obviousness confirms, once more, that referential gender does not represent sex, but assigns the complex and dynamic notion of socially intelligible gender to people. Another finding is, that like in English, neuter is not used for nonbinary reference in German, either. This points to the fact that neuter is in fact conceptually neutral, not gender inclusive. Speakers resort to using plurals, loanwords and neologisms, cobbling together a common gender not known to German before.

GENDER REPRESENTATION

REFERENCE

LANGUAGE INNOVATION

BINARY GENDER



M

Muñoz, María Emilia

University of Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli"

Queer Intimacies: Space, Relationality, and Identity in One Day in a Life

This presentation examines the film *One Day in a Life* (directed by Stefano Tummolini, 2008) through the combined lenses of queer studies and media studies, with particular attention to the relationship between space and identity. The analysis centres on how the beach — specifically the queer and nudist beach of Capocotta, in Rome — functions as a transformative environment that enables unexpected forms of intimacy. It is argued that the beach setting provides the conditions for the intimacy that develops between the protagonists, Salvatore and Daniela, who overcome their profound loneliness through a queer platonic relationship that defies conventional categorisation.

Although the film was largely misunderstood upon its release, recent developments in queer theory, particularly around queer kinship, relationality, and fluid identities, allow for its reassessment in a more positive light. *One Day in a Life* not only challenges heteronormative frameworks, but it also interrogates rigid identity boundaries that can emerge within the LGBT community itself. By presenting a bond between a gay man and a heterosexual woman that is neither romantic nor strictly sexual, the film disrupts normative assumptions about desire and interpersonal relationships.

In the film, the beach emerges as a space of possibility in both narrative and theoretical terms: Capocotta beach becomes a microcosm where multiple dynamics of sexuality, nudity, and sociability coexist, sometimes harmoniously and sometimes in tension. What begins as an experience coded as distinctly gay gradually transforms into a deeply human encounter marked by sincerity and connection. The affectionate, uncomplicated relationship that develops between Salvatore and Daniela stands in contrast to the transactional or superficial interactions surrounding them, and offers a counter-narrative of hope within an otherwise bleak context. Ultimately, the film demonstrates how the spatial setting can destabilise fixed notions of identity and enable forms of queer relationality grounded in vulnerability and deep emotion.

CONTEMPORARY ITALIAN CINEMA

SPATIALITY

QUEER THEORY

POLITICS OF DESIRE



M

Murphy, Brenda

SETU Waterford

Industrialised Anger and the Rage Machine: How Platform Capitalism Hijacks the Language of Activism

Historically, women's anger has functioned as a "situated survival practice" and a crucial instrument for political testimony, resistance, and collective mobilisation. However, as feminist activism transitions into the platform economy, a perilous transformation occurs: the metamorphosis of anger from expression to extraction. Building on Audre Lorde's 'The Uses of Anger' regarding the political utility of rage and Sara Ahmed's *Affective Economies*, this paper contends that we have entered an era of 'industrialised rage', wherein AI systems accelerate the commodification of women's voices. By converting embodied 'Voice' into a transferable, algorithmic 'Voiceprint', generative AI replicates and optimises authentic anger for market value while erasing the material circumstances that engender it. Through the lens of Shoshana Zuboff's *Surveillance Capitalism*, and Feminist Media Theory, I draw on the 'wild west' of AI-generated violence to analyse how these technologies decontextualise rage, transforming it into a 'template' devoid of accountability. The proliferation of 'sexual' deepfakes - construed here as a form of Stochastic Terrorism (Soraya Chemlay)- illustrates the weaponisation of this extracted affect to silence women and delegitimise genuine testimony. Applying Miranda Fricker's *Epistemic Injustice*, I argue that this industrialisation creates a 'plausibility trap' that undermines the credibility of lived experience.

INDUSTRIALISED RAGE

SURVEILLANCE CAPITALISM

EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE

SEXUAL DEEPFAKES

AFFECTIVE EXTRACTION



N

Nijmeijer, Henk and Odijk, Michiel— Rainbow Ambassador, Province of Drenthe, The Netherlands

Beyond the City: LGBTQ+ Inclusion in Rural Regions

Across Europe, inclusion policies often emerge from urban centres, while rural regions are perceived as lagging in their acceptance of gender and sexual diversity. The Province of Drenthe in the Netherlands offers a contrasting example. As the first "rainbow province" in the country, Drenthe has developed a regional model that connects local governments, education, sports associations, and civil society to strengthen social safety and equality for LGBTQ+ people in everyday life.

This paper presents the design and outcomes of two complementary programs — *De Veilige Kleedkamer* ("The Safe Locker Room") and *Veilige School Drenthe* ("Safe School Drenthe") — as examples of how regional cooperation can translate inclusive principles into sustainable practice. Drawing from qualitative feedback, stakeholder collaboration, and policy monitoring, the paper explores three key dimensions:

Institutional transformation

How cross-sectoral cooperation reshapes local policies and professional awareness.

Cultural change

How visibility, education, and dialogue reduce stigma in small communities.

Resilience and backlash

How to sustain inclusion efforts in times of growing polarisation and "rainbow fatigue."

Central to this approach is the role of the Rainbow Ambassador, an independent connector between government, education, and society. Acting as both facilitator and advocate, this role ensures that inclusion is not a top-down agenda but a shared regional commitment. Ultimately, the Drenthe approach demonstrates that safe spaces are not created by law or slogans, but by consistent, collective effort — turning equality into lived experience.

SOCIAL INCLUSION

RURAL DIVERSITY

GENDER AND SEXUALITY POLICY

SAFE SPACES

LGBT+



0

O'Doherty, Desmond

York University

Decolonizing Queer Citizenship: Tongzhi (Un)Belonging in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Mainland China

This paper examines how queer individuals in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Mainland China express notions of belonging, safety, and futurity within environments shaped by colonial legacies, authoritarianism, and uneven democracy. Focusing on life-history interviews with tongzhi (queer) participants, the paper inquires into how individuals articulate their lives about governmental authority, familial responsibilities, and global narratives of LGBTQ+ rights, and how these accounts challenge prevailing Euro-Atlantic paradigms of sexual citizenship. The paper integrates decolonial, feminist, and queer theoretical frameworks, positioning Sinophone East Asia within a wider "Global South" discourse instead of viewing it as a subordinate extension of Western gay politics.

In Hong Kong, participants in interviews delineate types of queer organization that originated from, yet are progressively limited by, political repression since the handover. In Taiwan, individuals perceive marriage equality as both an accomplishment and a locus of new exclusions rooted in class, ethnicity, and conventional coupledness. Narrators in Mainland China describe techniques of subtle resilience, strategic visibility, and negotiated compliance amid increasingly stringent regimes of surveillance and ideological control.

The paper demonstrates how tongzhi utilize alternative frameworks of intimacy and care, such as friendship networks, selected families, and translocal digital communities, that conflict with liberal discourses of individual rights and recognition. Instead of interpreting these as "lagging behind" Western trajectories, the paper contends that they reveal the coloniality of global LGBT rights discourses and create opportunities for more relational, intersectional conceptions of queer justice. The paper concludes by examining the implications of decolonizing queer citizenship in practice: prioritizing localized knowledge, recognizing persistent imperial structures, and heeding the critiques articulated by activists and community members whose experiences do not conform to rights-based narratives of success.

SINOPHONE EAST ASIA

TONGZHI CITIZENSHIP

DECOLONIAL QUEER THEORY

SEXUAL CITIZENSHIP



0

Ogwezzy, Oluwatosin Omobolanle

University of Port Harcourt

Intersectionality of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Human Trafficking: How GBV Facilitates Vulnerability to Trafficking among Nigerian Women

This abstract explores the critical intersectionality between Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and human trafficking, focusing on how GBV exacerbates the vulnerability of Nigerian women to trafficking. The study highlights that GBV, encompassing physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse, significantly compromises women's safety, autonomy, and economic stability in Nigeria. These conditions create fertile ground for traffickers to exploit survivors' vulnerabilities. This paper will rely on qualitative data, case studies, and existing literature. Despite Nigeria's legal frameworks aimed at combating GBV and trafficking, which include the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act and the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act, enforcement gaps and socio-cultural obstacles undermine effective protection and justice for survivors. The paper argues that experiences of domestic violence, intimate partner violence, and sexual exploitation often precede and facilitate human trafficking. Nigerian women subjected to GBV frequently face social stigma, economic deprivation, and lack of legal protection, which limit their options and make them prime targets for traffickers promising escape, employment, or better living conditions. The role of cultural norms, patriarchal structures, and systemic inequalities in perpetuating GBV and trafficker impunity is critically examined. The paper critically analyses the pathways linking GBV to trafficking, emphasising the cyclical, reinforcing nature of this intersection. It argues that policy and intervention strategies addressing trafficking must incorporate comprehensive GBV frameworks which effectively prevent trafficking and support survivors. The paper advocates for integrated legal reforms, survivor-centred support services, and community-level sensitisation programs specific to Nigerian socio-cultural realities. This intersectional approach enables a deeper understanding of how gender, violence, and trafficking interconnect within the Nigerian context, highlighting the imperative for multi-dimensional responses.

GENDER

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

WOMEN

VIOLENCE

NIGERIA



P

Phillips Cachia, Andrea

University of Malta

Displacement

An artistic work which explores the themes of my lived experience as a trans woman moving country because of the increasing trans and homophobia in my previous home. In the piece, I want to try and demonstrate the juxtaposition between the life I knew, as a foreign trans person in the UK, feeling increasingly unsafe in a country I grew up in, and my new reality of moving to Malta to be near the majority of my family but missing the familiarities of my old life. Themes I want to explore include transphobia, immigration and my sense of identity. I would like to make my submission in the form of acrylic on canvas art, with the canvas size and dimensions to be determined according to the content of the artwork itself.

TRANS IDENTITY

MIGRATION

DISPLACEMENT

BELONGING

TRANSPHOBIA



P

Portelli, Lorraine

University of Malta

Gender, Curriculum, and Change: Rethinking Fashion and Home Economics Education in Malta

Using documentary research and oral histories from key educators and policymakers, the paper traces the transformation of domestic subjects from tools of female socialisation — designed to prepare girls for homemaking — to modern subjects regarded as creative, vocational, and entrepreneurial. The inclusion of boys in Home Economics and Textiles Studies represented a significant pedagogical and ideological shift, challenging binary notions of gendered knowledge and domestic labor. However, despite policy reforms promoting inclusion and equity, textile-based learning remains culturally feminized and marginalised within the school curriculum.

This paper argues that Fashion and Home Economics education provides a fertile space for exploring how gender identities are constituted and negotiated through embodied, material, and aesthetic practices of making. It contends that rethinking these subjects through a critical, feminist lens can reposition them as transformative pedagogical spaces — ones that promote gender justice, creativity, and agency. Ultimately, the study contributes to ongoing debates in curriculum theory by framing Fashion and Textiles and Home Economics education as a dynamic site of cultural reproduction and resistance within the politics of schooling.

GENDER

CURRICULUM THEORY

FEMINIST PEDAGOGY

FASHION EDUCATION

HOME ECONOMICS



P

Portelli, Lorraine and Vella, Fiona

University of Malta

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE MALTESE FASHION INDUSTRY — A Gatekeeper and Producer Perspective

This study examines perceptions of diversity and inclusion within the Maltese fashion industry, focusing on the representation of race, body size, age, and sexual identity. While global fashion has increasingly embraced inclusive practices, research on these themes in Malta remains limited. The study aims to understand how key industry gatekeepers and producers perceive and influence diversity in local fashion imagery, including runway shows and advertising campaigns, and whether they support policies or legislation promoting inclusivity.

Adopting an interpretivist framework, the study employs a qualitative research design using semi-structured interviews with industry professionals to explore how cultural and institutional norms shape representations of beauty and identity. Through thematic analysis, key challenges and opportunities are identified, particularly concerning the visibility and acceptance of underrepresented groups. Bourdieu's theory of capital provides the theoretical foundation, offering insight into how forms of social, cultural, and economic power determine who gains visibility and legitimacy within Malta's fashion field.

Findings reveal that, despite growing awareness of diversity in some areas, traditional beauty standards and hierarchical power relations continue to limit progress. Industry decision-makers — such as agency directors, designers, and brand managers — exercise considerable influence over what constitutes acceptable representations of beauty, often constrained by market preferences and limited exposure to diverse models. Nevertheless, the research identifies emerging opportunities for brands to adopt diversity-driven strategies that could enhance both their social relevance and commercial success. The study concludes that fostering inclusivity in Maltese fashion requires systematic and collaborative action, including internal organisational reforms, education, and possibly policy intervention. Strengthening diversity not only aligns Malta with international standards but also contributes to a more equitable, creative, and socially responsible fashion industry.

POWER

IDENTITY

FASHION

DIVERSITY



P

Przybyło, Ela

Illinois State University

Materialities of Attraction: Gender, Attraction, and Ace Philosophy

This exploratory paper reflects on the links between asexual and nongendered being. I provide an overview of research on gender and asexuality and I suggest that asexuality, in addition to queering sexuality, also queers gender, through a sort of “gender squatting” or “squatting on gender,” which I understand in two ways: the first, drawing on Canton Winer’s work, as a space, a lot, devoid of gender, and second, drawing on the act of the squat itself, what the dictionary identifies as “to crouch or sit with one’s knees bent and one’s heels close to or touching one’s buttocks or the back of one’s thighs” as a sort of hovering above gender, a pose of gender dissidence. I want to provide a brief overview of some of the highlights of what asexuality studies has written about gender and provide an invitation to think with and against the question of gender composition and asexuality.

ASEXUALITY

NON GENDER



P

Psaila Stabile, Natalie and De Zordo, Silvia University of Malta / University of Barcelona

"I didn't feel safe discussing it with absolutely anyone": Maltese Women's Experiences with Abortion Stigma

Malta's almost complete abortion ban does not deter people from having abortions, exposing them to great legal and societal risks. Abortion stigma, as conceptualised by Kumar et al in 2009, is present within Maltese society, primarily as a consequence of Malta's severe abortion laws, and strong Catholic influence in the country. In this paper the main drivers for abortion stigma are discussed and how it is experienced by Maltese women having abortions when interacting with various sectors within the Maltese community is explored.

The data was collected within the REPROMOB research Sub-project 2, hosted by the University of Barcelona, that explored mobilities of people and pills across borders and territories for abortion access. The paper analyses data from semi-structured interviews with 20 Maltese women who have had abortions from one year to 30 years ago. 10 participants travelled to access abortion services abroad, while another 10 received abortion pills by post from the organisation, Women on Web. The paper also draws upon notes and observations gathered during these interviews.

The paper discusses how participants engage in acts of secrecy to avoid discovery by those around them, such as family, friends, and work colleagues. These behaviours were also exhibited by those who accessed legal abortion in other countries, and those who have had a medical abortion many years ago, and so, their actions are now legally time-barred. Based on the interviews, the paper explores how the three main types of abortion stigma — internalised, perceived, and enacted — are exhibited by various community actors such as the women themselves, medical professionals, the clergy, and others. Finally, thoughts and possible solutions to counter abortion stigma as expressed by participants are also presented.

ABORTION STIGMA

MALTA

SECRECY



S

Sadeghipouya, Mahdis

Université libre de Bruxelles

Muslim lesbian activism to decolonize “political lesbianism”. On the intersectional struggles of racialized lesbian activists in France

In this presentation, an excerpt from my doctoral dissertation titled “Revolutionary Sisters: The Transformative Praxis of Migrant Muslim Lesbians and/or decedents of Migrations in France” defended at Paris 8 University in September 2024, I examine the decolonial interpretations and practices of “lesbianity”, carried out by racialized lesbian activists in France, in order to free it from a form of singularization—particularly Western—as “sexuality”, and from “lesbianism” as a political inscription of so-called lesbian sexuality, monopolized by dominant Western feminist movements. Together with the research participants, using qualitative methods (semi-structured interviews and participant observation) and within their non-mixed safe spaces, we explored these concepts to immerse ourselves in a form of “community knowledge” of activism that they draw from the heart of violence, discrimination, and exclusion, as lesbians, (socially considered as) women, racialized individuals, and Muslims—knowledge they have cultivated in their safe spaces and within small, closed groups, and which they have recently brought to the forefront of public activism against various forms of sexism, lesbophobia, racism, and Islamophobia/Muslimophobia in France. In summary, I have attempted to trace the path leading to the formation of a form of political lesbianism, which asserts that heterosexuality is neither the result of biology nor a simple sexual orientation, but a political institution constituting the very foundation of male and heteronormative domination, by Muslim lesbian activists in France, through their intersectional and multidimensional activism, which has become more visible since the 2000s.

POLITICAL LESBIANISM

RACIALIZED LESBIANS

MUSLIMS

SAFE SPACE

COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE



5

Sadrudin, Munir Moosa

Exploring the Challenges of Sexual Diversities and Gender Identities in Southeast Asia

Gender identities and sexual diversities are complex subject matter to study in the Southeast Asian context due to cultural sensitivities, and a gap between policies, preferences, and practices. In most cases, individuals with diverse identities face numerous challenges that affect their overall well-being. This paper sheds light on the challenges faced by individuals with sexual diversities and gender identities in Southeast Asian countries. A desk review examined the commonalities in challenges, the factors contributing to them, and their impact on people's well-being, without focusing on specific countries. In addition, an anonymous case study is included to illustrate the challenges, hopes, and fears through the lived experience of a person whose gender identity and sexual diversity are compromised by family and society at large. The findings suggest that challenges include a lack of acceptance due to social stigma and cultural taboo, stringent laws and policies, family pressure, social intolerance and violence, which have brought issues to well-being, self-doubt, insecurities, fears, hopelessness, and mental health challenges among those with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. Identities are often kept concealed due to fear of negative consequences. The case study reflected fears such as growing insecurities due to concealment of identity, unpredictable future, discrimination, familial abuse, social bullying, violence, and isolation. It also identified continuous education, social work, and ongoing mentor support as sources of encouragement. The case also highlighted hopes of studying in a multicultural country and of continuing to serve humanity as future goals. There is a dire need for academic institutions to introduce a multi-disciplinary subject on understanding diverse gender identities and sexualities for administrative staff, teachers, parents, and students to remove misconceptions and develop a sense of affection and respect for individuals with diverse gender identities and sexualities. It is also recommended to gather narratives through storytelling, narrative writing, or documentary film as a powerful integrative tool in Southeast Asian context to share resistance, achievements, and self-empowerment strategies for raising awareness at the societal level.

GENDER IDENTITIES

SEXUAL DIVERSITIES

SOUTHEAST ASIA

WELL-BEING

IDENTITY CRISES



5

Sant, Marta and Chetcuti Dimech, Chiara University of Malta / University of Padova

Young Maltese men's understandings and experiences of masculinity and toxic masculinity

This exploratory study directly investigated what young Maltese men understand by masculinity and toxic masculinity. Five Maltese cisgendered males took part in this qualitative research, and data was collected via audio-recorded, semi-structured interviews. Transcripts were then analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis. Participants discussed masculinity in the context of specific physical ideals, their role as 'providers', professional choices and the consequences of emotional suppression. Toxic masculinity was linked to harmful behaviours, including violence, homophobic and misogynistic discourse, humiliation and the over-importance of status. More notably, they referred to the diffusion of these ideas on social media, particularly by Andrew Tate.

The participants described evolving notions of masculinity, including the incorporation of androgyny and femininity. Although the findings are situated and considered within Malta's unique sociocultural context, they echo global concerns and discussions surrounding masculine identities, emphasising the importance of critically engaging with hegemonic notions of masculinity. This research contributes to the ever-growing discourse on gender in the Maltese context, calling for the promotion of male representation in nurturing roles and the need to address harmful behaviour, most specifically the homophobic and anti-feminine discourse present in the socialisation of young boys in Malta. Additionally, further investigation regarding the ways in which toxic masculinity on social media affects and influences young men locally is warranted.

MALTA

MASCULINITY

TOXIC MASCULINITY

REFLEXIVE THEMATIC ANALYSIS

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH



S

Scerri, Josianne

University of Malta

Targeting the Beast along my illness trajectory: coping strategies of women with triple-negative breast cancer

Triple-negative breast cancer (TNBC) is an aggressive breast cancer subtype, lacking targeted therapies and having higher mortality and recurrence rates. It is disproportionately diagnosed in younger women and those with a family history of breast cancer. Despite this, there is a dearth in the literature about the coping strategies of women with TNBC. This qualitative study explores the coping strategies of 11 adult women aged 26–63 years with non-metastatic TNBC. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, and transcribed texts were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

Findings reveal that coping was deeply embedded in women's relational worlds and cultural constructions of femininity, responsibility, and resilience. Participants mobilised support from spouses, friends, and peers with breast cancer, reflecting gendered norms that position women as relational caregivers who must renegotiate their own need for care when illness disrupts these roles. Many described the pressure to remain emotionally and physically present for children and partners, highlighting how motherhood and family roles functioned both as sources of strength and as burdens that intensified illness management.

Meaning-making practices, such as spirituality, gratitude, and altruism, helped participants reframe their struggles and sustain a coherent sense of self amid bodily changes resulting from aggressive treatment. Lifestyle modifications, such as dietary adjustments and exercise, alongside cognitive strategies, such as distraction through work or hobbies, enabled women to reassert agency in contexts where treatment options were limited. Such multidimensional coping strategies underscore the complex interplay of gendered identity, relational commitments, and embodied vulnerability in coping with TNBC.

This study highlights the need for gender-responsive survivorship care that acknowledges women's caregiving identities, the sociocultural expectations shaping their coping, and the struggles intrinsic to maintaining family roles, while confronting a life-threatening illness. Integrating relational, psychosocial, and existential support into TNBC care pathways is essential to address the gendered realities of women's experiences.

TRIPLE-NEGATIVE BREAST CANCER

COPING STRATEGIES

GENDERED IDENTITY

RELATIONAL SUPPORT

SURVIVORSHIP CARE



5

Seewald, Maria Alexandra

Queer-Feminist Counterplaces in Times of Polycrisis: Cultural Production between Local Space and Digital Publics

The transnational lesbian/queer community that has formed around Skala Eressos on Lesbos over the past five decades offers a rare empirical lens onto how queer counterplaces emerge, endure and transform across time and borders, particularly under conditions of ongoing polycrisis. Drawing on long-term feminist (auto-)ethnographic research conducted between 2018 and 2025 — supplemented by multi-sited fieldwork with the same participants in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and the Americas — the project traces how belonging, identity and spatial practices circulate through a transnational network whose centre of gravity is a heterotopic site in the Mediterranean, while increasingly extending into digital publics. Particular attention is given to the role of mobilities in shaping these spatial relations and sustaining transnational connections across both physical and mediated environments.

Building on this material, the paper develops a focused analysis of how lesbian/queer heterotopia is sustained through mobility, spatial attachment and recurrent forms of cultural production and collective practice. While grounded in a specific site, the research speaks directly to broader questions of power, community formation and the historical trajectories of lesbian/queer spatial production, emphasizing processes of spatial transformation across shifting social, cultural and geographic contexts, including the interplay between local spaces and digital publics. Methodologically, the contribution introduces a multi-layered mapping technique that integrates ethnographic thick description, interview data, spatial observation and mobility patterns. This visual approach condenses temporal shifts, spatial arrangements and transnational trajectories into a single analytical surface, making visible how particular places accrue meaning, how routes and seasonal rhythms shape social life, and how belonging is produced within a geographically dispersed collective. By linking qualitative depth with visual analysis, the paper offers new insight into how lesbian/queer world-making unfolds through movement, embodied practice and the ongoing transformation of space.

LESBIAN/QUEER WORLD-MAKING

HETEROTOPIA

TRANSNATIONAL MOBILITIES

CRITICAL MASS

FEMINIST ETHNOGRAPHY



5

Seewald, Maria Alexandra

ANDERSRUMportrait: Participatory Queer-Feminist Artist Photoshoot

This participatory art action invites all conference participants to join ANDERSRUMportrait, an ongoing intersectional queer-feminist art and activism project created by photographer, artist, and gender researcher Alexa Seewald. Since 2010, Seewald has photographed more than 4,200 people "andersrum" (= the other way around) — from behind — transforming a once-stigmatizing term for queerness (andersrum) into an empowered visual and political gesture.

The photoshoot offers participants the opportunity to become part of a growing international archive of visual resistance. By taking part, individuals make a deliberate artistic and political statement against heterosexism, queerphobia, lesbophobia, racism, sexism, ableism, ageism, and other intersecting forms of discrimination. Rooted in lesbian and queer-feminist activism, the project is explicitly inclusive: LGBTQIA+ individuals and allies of all genders, sexualities, religions, ages, and backgrounds are invited to participate.

Photographing people from behind queers normative portrait conventions and challenges the facial-centric logic of identity in Western visual cultures. Without the pressure to "perform" a face — often shaped by internalised beauty standards, gender norms, and societal expectations — participants respond more spontaneously, authentically, and confidently. This approach has proven especially empowering for marginalised and camera-shy individuals, and has enabled broad participation at Prides, queer community centres, art festivals, schools, government buildings, and major events including dOCUMENTA (13). For the conference, Seewald will install a temporary open studio, offering a low-threshold space for community participation, reflection, and creative political expression. With participant consent, the resulting images become part of the international ANDERSRUMportrait archive and may be exhibited in future public installations.

QUEER-FEMINIST ACTIVISM

PARTICIPATORY PHOTOGRAPHY

VISIBILITY

INTERSECTIONALITY

PUBLIC ART



5

Seewald, Maria Alexandra

Queering the Gaze: ANDERSRUMportrait and 15 Years of Queer-Feminist Art Activism in Times of Backlash

This presentation examines ANDERSRUMportrait as a distinctive form of queer-feminist art activism that responds directly to rising right-wing backlash, anti-gender politics, and renewed attacks on LGBTQIA+ lives. Founded in 2010 by photographer, artist, and gender researcher Alexa Seewald, the project has generated more than 4,200 portraits and 33 large-scale, open-access exhibitions in public space, including participation in the Critical Art Ensemble at dOCUMENTA (13).

What makes ANDERSRUMportrait unique is the combination of linguistic, visual, and political reversal. The German slang term andersrum — literally "the other way," historically used to stigmatise queer lives — has undergone a process of reappropriation within LGBTQIA+ communities.

ANDERSRUMportrait extends this reclaiming by turning the logic of portraiture itself "the other way around." Instead of framing identity through the face — a dominant site of recognition, surveillance, and norm enforcement in Western visual culture — the project photographs people from behind.

This inversion queers the portrait. It interrupts normative expectations, loosens the pressure of gendered and racialised beauty standards, counters the voyeuristic male gaze, and opens space for more authentic, self-determined participation. The absence of the face transforms portraiture from an instrument of classification into a tool of resistance. Individuals are not captured as objects; they participate as agents in a shared political gesture. The presentation argues that ANDERSRUMportrait functions as collective visual protest against stigmas and intersecting oppressions — heterosexism, racism, sexism, ableism, ageism, and classism. Each portrait becomes a deliberate act of visibility without exposure, intimacy without surveillance, individuality within solidarity. ANDERSRUMportrait's public installations — on streets, at Prides, in government buildings, queer centres, universities, and community spaces — circumvent institutional barriers and reclaim public space for those routinely pushed out of it.

QUEER-FEMINIST ART ACTIVISM

REAPPROPRIATION

PUBLIC SPACE

PARTICIPATORY PRACTICE

VISUAL RESISTANCE



5

Sijarina, Liridona

Central European University (CEU)

The Politics of Temporal Displacement and Social Reproduction: Aging Women under Neoliberal Restructuring in Postwar Kosova

This paper, drawn from a chapter of the book *Social Reproduction Through Labor and Coffee*, investigates how aging women in postwar Kosova negotiate the sweeping social, economic, and temporal restructurings produced by neoliberal state-building. After NATO's intervention and the establishment of UNMIK, Kosova's reconstruction was guided by Structural Adjustment Policies aligned with the Washington Consensus, embedding privatization, market liberalization, and fiscal austerity into the foundations of governance. In this setting, women emerged from war-induced dispossession and trauma into an order that individualized responsibility and redefined citizenship through human-capital paradigms. Their strategies for recovery — migration, small-scale entrepreneurship, reliance on remittances, and forms of social solidarity — demonstrate both resilience and the reproduction of violence through new economic dependencies.

As these women age, neoliberal "acceleration" reshapes their temporal and spatial orientations. The shift from village-based kinship systems to market-driven, urban rhythms has weakened intergenerational bonds, fragmented community life, and devalued reproductive labor that once grounded their social significance. Nostalgia thus becomes not merely an affective response but an analytical lens through which women trace ruptures in moral order, belonging, and the pace of everyday life. Their narratives foreground the erosion of communal care, the commodification of social relations, and their growing marginalization as bodies no longer legible as economically productive.

By situating these experiences within broader debates on neoliberal temporality, social reproduction, and postwar reconstruction, the paper shows how aging reveals the limits and exclusions embedded in Kosova's development project. While younger women are mobilized as symbols of the "New Kosovar Woman," aligned with modernization and Europeanization discourses, older women become peripheral to these agendas and increasingly dependent within nuclear family structures promoted as normative. Ultimately, the paper argues that aging in neoliberal Kosova is shaped by shifting regimes of time, labor, and social relation-making.

AGING WOMEN

NEOLIBERAL RESTRUCTURING

SOCIAL REPRODUCTION

POSTWAR KOSOVA

TEMPORAL DISPLACEMENT



T

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Women in Greek sports journalism: Persistent inequalities in a traditionally male domain

Traditionally, the field of sports journalism has been - and continues to be - «a male bastion» (Franks & O'Neil, 2016). Prior to the 1960s, women were rarely present in sports reporting and were largely confined to covering women's teams. Over time, however, they began to draw on their experience in the field to establish themselves professionally. Despite this progress, their male colleagues were often resistant to women's upward mobility (Swanson, 2009), leading female journalists to confront stereotypical attitudes and behaviors in their daily working environment (Spiliopoulos, Mastrogiannakis, Kokkina & Tsigilis, 2020). Today, more than six decades after Title IX and the gradual entrance of women into sports journalism, gender continues to shape both the types of sports women are assigned to cover and the visibility they receive. The field remains as male-dominated as ever. As Panagiotopoulou (2013) observes, sports journalism in Greece is written by men, about men, and promotes male athletes - and male journalists. This enduring imbalance may be attributed to the persistent discrimination and gender bias that women face throughout their careers, often relegating them to the background. The present study examines the current landscape of sports journalism in Greece through semi-structured interviews with 20 Greek female sports journalists, exploring whether conditions have changed over the past four years (2021-2025). The findings indicate that the majority of participants continue to encounter stereotypical perceptions regarding women's presence in sports journalism. Many also report experiencing incidents in their professional trajectories where they were not treated with respect or were subjected to various forms of gender-based hostility. Persistent pay inequalities further reinforce their view that sports journalism has long been - and remains - a predominantly male domain, despite the progress made in recent years.

WOMEN SPORTS JOURNALISTS

MALE-DOMINATED DOMAIN

GREECE

GENDER

STEREOTYPES



v

Vella Aquilina, Claire and co-authors

University of Malta

Perceptions and Attitudes towards non-Maltese Live-in Care Workers in Malta

Caring responsibilities — even in relation to elderly family members — continue to fall disproportionately on women in Malta (Cutajar, Camilleri, and Grixti, 2023). With the increased participation of women in the Maltese labour market (Cassar, Cutajar, and Thake, 2023), Maltese families have become increasingly reliant on live-in carers, predominantly women who are Third Country Nationals (Bonello, Borg, Debono, and Fiorini, 2025). This paper investigates Maltese women's perceptions and attitudes towards non-Maltese live-in care workers, with particular attention to the gendered, racialised, and classed power dynamics that structure these relationships. It further examines how such perceptions shape the social inclusion — or exclusion — of foreign live-in carers within Maltese society.

Using a qualitative research design, the study draws on ten semi-structured interviews with Maltese nationals who employ a non-Maltese live-in carer for an elderly family member. Data were analysed through reflexive thematic analysis. Informed by a feminist epistemology and grounded in Black Feminist thought, the paper foregrounds the enduring gendered and racialised stereotypes that permeate live-in care work in Malta. It highlights the emotional labour required not only of migrant carers — who must manage the intimate, affective, and often invisible dimensions of care — but also of Maltese women employers, who navigate feelings of ambivalence, guilt, and vulnerability when delegating familial caregiving to non-Maltese workers.

The analysis delineates the multifaceted power dynamics embedded in live-in care arrangements. While employers occupy positions of structural power as citizens with legal, economic, and social privileges, live-in carers may hold significant micro-level power within the domestic sphere. This is particularly evident given the intimate and emotional nature of their labour, which places them in close proximity to vulnerable family members, making their role indispensable. The study demonstrates that these relationships are fundamentally interdependent: employers rely on carers not only for the physical and emotional labour of caregiving but also for the continuity of family life, while carers depend on employers for residency, income, and social stability. The paper concludes that this interdependence can facilitate the gradual integration of migrant live-in carers into Maltese society. Over time, these 'barranin' (outsiders) may be perceived as insiders through the relational.

LIVE-IN CARERS

MIGRANT WORKERS

POWER

PERCEPTIONS

MALTA



V

Vingelli, Giovanna

University of Calabria

Reframing Victimhood: How Italian MRAs Construct Public Discourse on Gender Violence

The proposed presentation examines the narrative frameworks of Italian Men's Rights Activists (MRAs) concerning gender-based violence, with a focus on their growing visibility in public debate and institutional arenas. The research originates from the urgent need to understand how these groups contribute to shaping discourses that undermine national and European efforts to prevent and address violence against women. Situated within the institutional context of the University of Calabria's Centre for Women's Studies, the study is part of a broader research initiative on digital misogyny, backlash politics, and the evolution of anti-gender movements in Italy.

Methodologically, the project combines qualitative content analysis of online platforms, Telegram channels, and websites of the main Italian MRA organisations with discourse analysis of their narratives on false accusations, "symmetry" of violence, father's rights, and the delegitimisation of anti-violence centres. Additional data were gathered through the coding of memes and posts within a bespoke dataset constructed for this research.

Findings reveal a coherent narrative infrastructure centred on three pillars:

Pillar 1

The denial or minimisation of gender-based violence.

Pillar 2

The reframing of men as primary victims of institutional bias.

Pillar 3

The strategic professionalisation of MRA groups, which increasingly adopt quasi-scientific language and legalistic framing.

These narratives circulate widely across social media ecosystems, contributing to public confusion and reinforcing antagonistic positions toward gender equality policies.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

MANOSPHERE

ANTIFEMINISM



v

Vishnupriya, Mankuzhi

University of Hyderabad

Changing trajectories of traditional postnatal care in Kerala: Rise of ayurvedic postnatal care

This qualitative study documents the transformation of postnatal care in Kerala, mapping how traditional postnatal care — historically provided through kinship networks and lower-caste labour — is being absorbed, reframed, and marketed as part of the Ayurvedic wellness industry, following broader trends of commodification of care. It situates postnatal care as the remnant of traditional obstetrics, once stigmatized and systematically marginalized from the modernization processes of both Ayurveda and biomedicine due to its association with lower-caste women.

Drawing on in-depth interviews with traditional postnatal carers, Ayurveda doctors, service providers, and mothers who have received both traditional and institutional care across northern Kerala — Kozhikode, Malappuram, and Wayanad — as well as secondary data, this research examines how professionalized and commercialized services under Ayurvedic clinics are emerging as legitimate postnatal care providers. The transition reflects broader social structural changes, including urbanization, family nuclearization, shifting gender roles, and growing market demand for medically sanctioned care.

This ayurvedisation is fundamentally shaped by the selective appropriation and erasure of subaltern expertise, reinforcing caste and gender hierarchies in determining what counts as legitimate knowledge and practice. The study argues that these developments simultaneously expand consumer agency for some women while rendering care inaccessible and unaffordable for others. This transformation also obscures and undervalues the generational expertise of marginalized caregivers, rendering invisible the epistemic extraction from lower-caste communities. Ultimately, this dynamic raises critical questions for medical pluralism, the politics of knowledge, and the commodification of reproductive care in contemporary India, whilst contributing to ongoing debates on how indigenous forms of care are reshaped under neoliberal wellness capitalism and who benefits from these transformations.

POSTNATAL CARE

AYURVEDA

CASTE

MEDICAL PLURALISM

KNOWLEDGE POLITICS



v

Vissicchio, Florencia Noel

University of Glasgow

"Just because I'm able to, should I do it?" Why do women in Buenos Aires City choose not to have children: A Critical Discourse Analysis

Fertility rates are declining worldwide, and Argentina is no exception. Between 2014 and 2024 the country experienced a sustained decline in fertility that doubled in Buenos Aires City (CABA), revealing the need to understand the underlying reasons for these changing reproductive patterns. This study aimed to analyse the criteria women in CABA discuss when reflecting on the decision of voluntary childlessness (VC). The objectives were to: a) understand women's narratives for not wanting children; b) describe how these narratives intersect with social discourses about motherhood; c) examine how contextual factors shape women's narratives.

This study employed a qualitative methodology, with a constructivist, feminist, and intersectional research approach. It employed semi-structured interviews with nine cisgender, white women aged +35 living in CABA. Critical discourse analysis was conducted based on Fairclough's framework. All interviews were anonymized. Participants were recruited voluntarily and gave informed consent. The study received ethical approval from the University of Glasgow.

Findings showed the motivations for VC were heterogeneous and overlapping. Individual reasons included professional aspirations, economic concerns and a lack of desire while the main discourses around motherhood these women navigated were the motherhood imperative, the maternal instinct discourse, and the caring imperative. They contested and challenged ideas that VC is lonely and selfish, and that motherhood serves as care insurance for the elderly. Yet while doing so, they portrayed themselves as caring, nurturing, and protective — key traits that define motherhood in their discourse. In conclusion, when viewed together, these discourses highlight that in challenging one oppressive discourse, women may inadvertently reinforce others that are equally restrictive, such as that of the "sacrificed caregiving woman". Finally, discourses reflect the complexities of caregiving developed within families in Argentina, and the need for a public policy debate focused on care, not just on fertility.

GENDER

MOTHERHOOD

VOLUNTARY CHILDLESSNESS

DECLINING FERTILITY



V

Vlachos, Theodoros

Rethinking Professionalism: How non-binary and gender non-conforming employees navigate Heteroprofessionalism in Denmark

Non-binary and gender non-conforming people face persistent challenges in expressing their identity in professional settings, shaped by heteronormative and cisnormative norms. In recent years workplace inclusion policies have made progress, although they often fail to address deeper structural expectations of "professionalism" that marginalise gender-diverse employees. This paper investigates how non-binary people navigate gendered expectations in the workplace, developing practices of daily survival and expression within corporate environments in Denmark. Using a queer phenomenological approach and based on the concept of heteroprofessionalism, the study analyzes interviews with six non-binary employees from different organizations.

This research describes that participants experience hypervisibility and invisibility simultaneously, as they are required to "perform" professional roles or self-censor within the gender binary. In parallel, they adopt creative strategies, such as strategic use of language to address performative challenges and dress codes, with the aim of regaining their personal voice and redefining their institutional recognition in the workplace.

The analysis contributes to queer research on visibility, gender and everyday performance by showcasing how heteroprofessionalism functions as a form of 'soft power' intertwined in unspoken rules. Gender, rather than being understood as a barrier, emerges as a dynamic expression to redefine professionalism. By centering lived experiences, the paper offers tools for reflection and action for other gender non-conforming people seeking space, visibility, and euphoria in their work, while also supporting the need to move from symbolic inclusion to structural transformation, calling on organizations to rethink how "professionalism" is defined and monitored.

HETEROPROFESSIONALISM

TRANS STUDIES

GENDER PERFORMATIVITY

WORKPLACE EXPERIENCES



Y

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Södertörn University

Femonationalism and Anti-Gender Politics in Europe: Two Sexual Regimes, One Ethnonationalist Logic, with Insights from Sweden

This presentation examines the sexual and reproductive politics at the heart of contemporary ethnonationalism in the West. As far-right and conservative movements gain influence, national imaginaries are increasingly shaped by anxieties over gender, reproduction, and demographic change. These anxieties generate gendered and racialised discourses that position women's bodies—particularly as mothers—as both symbols and instruments of national purity, biological continuity, and cultural reproduction. The talk argues that the intersection of sexual politics and demographic fear produces overlapping femonationalist and anti-gender currents that seek to regulate who can reproduce, what may be reproduced, and ultimately, who belongs to the nation.

Drawing on Sara R. Farris's concept of femonationalism and Nira Yuval-Davis's theorisation of the relation between women, nation, and biological and cultural reproduction, the talk uses Sweden as a case study to illustrate how these dynamics unfold in policy and public debate. Migrant mothers have become a key political figure within Swedish discourse, shifting from being portrayed as oppressed subjects in need of emancipation through gender equality and paid labour to being constructed as reproducers of a "wrong" culture, accused of having too many children, exploiting welfare systems, and threatening the moral and demographic order of the nation.

The talk argues that the current wave of conservative movements in Western societies is deeply rooted in ethnonationalism and seeks to secure racial boundaries and sustain white Christian dominance. Within this framework, two seemingly distinct but ideologically connected sexual politics operate in tandem. Anti-gender politics are directed inward, toward those recognised as part of the national community, aiming to reassert traditional gender roles, heterosexual family norms, and reproductive duties as markers of moral citizenship. Femonationalism, by contrast, is directed outward, toward migrants residing within Western societies—particularly non-European and Muslim women—and deploys feminist and gender-equality rhetoric to racialise, discipline, and exclude them. Despite their apparent opposition, both are grounded in the same ethnonationalist logic that defines who is entitled to reproduce the nation, biologically, socially, and culturally. Based on this analysis, the talk underscores the urgent need for progressive feminist and queer movements to recognise and confront the deep entanglement between anti-gender politics, racism, and anti-migrant agendas in the contemporary West. In this critical moment, opposing the conservative backlash against gender and sexuality cannot be separated from resisting the racial and ethnonationalist projects that sustain it. Only by addressing these interconnected formations together can feminist and queer mobilisations effectively challenge the sexual and reproductive politics that underpin today's ethnonationalist resurgence.

FEMONATIONALISM

ANTI-GENDER

ETHNONATIONALIST

SEXUAL REGIMES



Z

Zammit, Charmaine

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Reimagining Identity through Contemporary Art Education

This paper examines the role of art education in promoting critical understandings of gender and sexuality as dynamic sites of power, identity, embodiment, and representation. Drawing on feminist, queer, and visual cultural theories, the abstract shows that contemporary art lessons offer a unique pedagogical space where students can question the often-dominant cultural narratives, challenge what is repeatedly considered 'normal', and explore the fluidity of self-identity through creative practice. As Desai and Chalmers (2007) emphasise, visual culture deeply shapes the way individuals interpret and adopt social meanings, making it essential for students to critically observe images that construct gendered and sexual identities. Through visual analysis, reflective dialogue, and art practice, students engage with questions of visibility, marginalization, and empowerment, developing the ability to recognize how artworks both reflect and normalise societal expectations. This paper highlights strategies through which inclusive, critically informed pedagogies can validate different lived experiences while encouraging empathy, visual literacy, critical thinking through personal and social awareness. Ultimately, the paper demonstrates that embracing gender and sexuality as significant to artistic inquiry not only enriches creative expression but also strengthens students' ability to transform the cultural power structures that shape their lives. This positions art education as a crucial site for social justice and personal action. Moving forward, the paper argues for sustained teacher training, curriculum reform, and institutional support to ensure that gender- and sexuality-inclusive pedagogies become embedded practices rather than isolated one-off projects. It calls for continued research and collaborative dialogue among teachers, scholars, and students to cultivate art-rooms that actively challenge inequities and encourage critically engaged understandings of identity.

ART EDUCATION

GENDER AND SEXUALITY

IDENTITY AND REPRESENTATION

VISUAL CULTURE



Z

Zammit, Nikolas and Farrugia, Lorleen

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'Il-Mararagel' & 'In-Nanna': Expressions of the Maltese Queer Identity / 'Fid-Dar tan-Nanna'

This paper explores the archetypally and culturally steeped identities of Maltese queer-identifying individuals within the unique sociocultural context of Malta, as explored retroactively within their individuation processes from childhood up till the present day. Through the BNIM method of narrative interview with three trans* participants, the ways of how these queer Maltese individuals developed selfhood, negotiated identity, and integrated cultural elements was explored. The ongoing tension between newly introduced culturally sanctioned identities and narratives provided by Western media and cemented through LGBTIQ+ legal frameworks and the deeper search for meaningful, culturally relevant expressions of the Self emerged throughout the narrative thematic analysis. Key findings highlighted the way different contextual elements of Maltese culture shaped the distinct identities of the participants involved; which included a deep sense of familial lineage, and the emergence of an archetypal 'Nanna/Nannu' figure and the 'Mararagel' — a gender-neutral androgynous figure encompassing both the culturally masculine and feminine; possibly cultural expressions of the recently discussed 'Queer Archetype' (Olivieri-Blackmore, 2015). These expressions emerged along with unique challenges the participants faced relevant to the Maltese context. The loss of connection with queer forefathers, struggles with safety and belonging, difficulties finding accurate descriptive language in the shifting environment between the Western terms found in legal documentation and local cultural expression were all prominent themes. This collection of five artistic works explores the emergence of the unisex, androgynous 'Nannu/Nanna Archetype' through a reflection on the blending of gendered traits with age and maturity, and their resultant expression as a Queer Archetype within Maltese culture. Inspired by the themes emerging from the undergraduate thesis: 'The Queer Archetype: The Individuation of Maltese Queer Folk,' the pieces invite audiences to slow down, consider gendered polarities, and engage with the hidden queerness steeped in the traditional environment of the 'Dar tan-Nanna' (the Grandmother's House).

IDENTITY

MALTESE CULTURE

QUEER

LGBTIQ+

INDIVIDUATION