



6th Edition: Global Congress on
**Gender and Sexuality
Studies**

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PROCEEDING BOOK

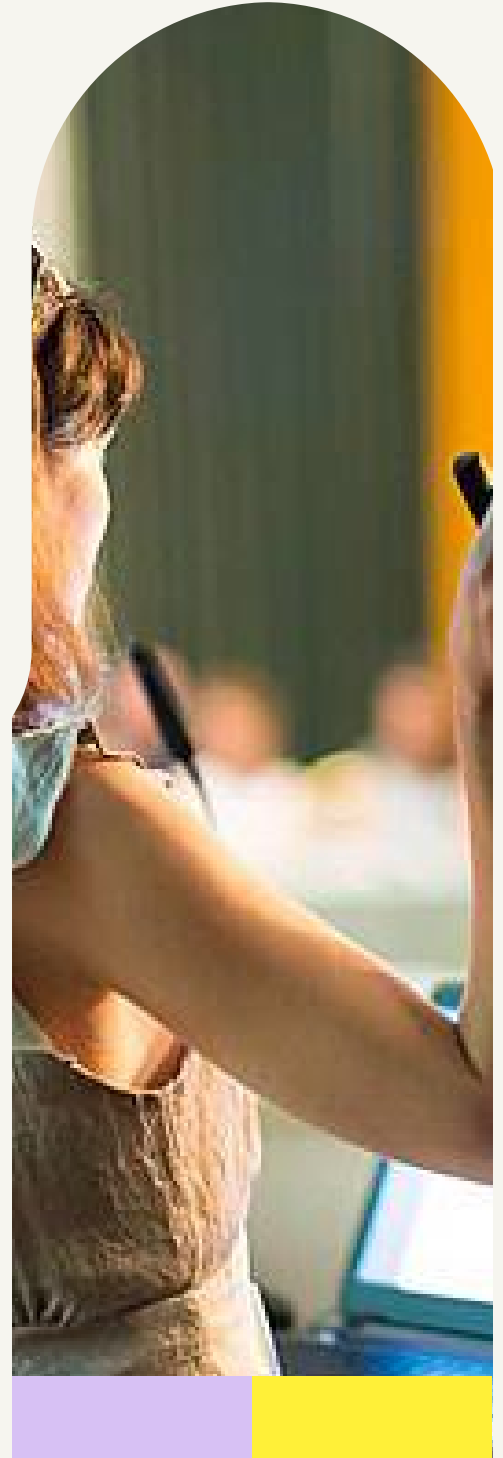


Introduction

The Gender and Sexuality Conference 2024, organized by the Sciinov Group, was successfully held on October 21-22, 2024. This two-day event brought together experts, scholars, activists, and thought leaders from around the world to discuss a wide range of topics related to gender, sexuality, and their intersections with social, cultural, and political issues.

The event provided a platform for both established and emerging voices, with participants from diverse backgrounds contributing to dynamic conversations about the evolving understanding of gender and sexuality in today's world. The Sciinov Group was proud to host this inspiring and impactful conference, which not only highlighted critical issues but also offered hope and actionable solutions for a more inclusive future.

Keynote Presentations



Sexuality as Spectrum in Shonali Bhoose's Margarita with a Straw

Rukhaya Mohammad Kunhi

Nehru Arts and Science College, India



Abstract:

Margarita with a Straw, a 2014 Indian Hindi Language drama film directed by Shonali Bhoose depicts how the protagonist, Laila, a girl with cerebral palsy, embarks on exploring her own sexuality. The movie highlights the idea of sexual fluidity through the conspicuous symbol of the straw and the motif of abosexuality with the metaphor of the cocktail drink. The movie highlights that sexuality is not a dichotomous phenomenon, but a spectrum. Majority of research proves that female sexuality is more fluid than male sexuality. In keeping with the idea of abosexuality, research over several decades has demonstrated that sexual orientation can be at any point along a continuum, from exclusive attraction to the opposite sex to exclusive attraction to the same sex, as the shape of the straw in the movie suggests. Laila becomes confused regarding her own sexual orientation as she plays between various dialectical pairs like abled/disabled, heterosexual/homosexual, visual/tactile in the quest to complete her sexuality. Interestingly there is no hardened polarization between the opposite sexes, diluting the idea of heteronormativity. The idea of being abled is treated analogous to the notion of heteronormativity, with all antithetical dispositions of being differently abled/divergent sexualities treated as deviant. Also, homogenous entities that have evolved from the same mass are purportedly seen to be in conflict as opposed to heterogeneous masses. This idea is metaphorically foregrounded with Khanum, Laila's love interest being of Bangladeshi-Pakistani descent.

Biography:

Dr. Rukhaya Mohammad Kunhi is an award-winning writer who has published her works in national and international anthologies and journals. In 2016, she was listed as IWI's Incredible Women Writers of India. She was catalogued among the best late 20th century Indian essayists like Arun Shourie, M.J. Akbar, Pankaj Mishra, Arundhati Roy, Amit Chaudhuri, A.K. Ramanujan, etc. in the American site humanitiesinstitute.org. She was recently awarded with the Gifted Poet Award 2020 by Women-Empowered India (WE). In 2021, Dr. Rukhaya was awarded the Reuel International Prize for poetry. In 2022, she was listed amongst 100 Inspiring Women of Kerala by RBTC, a global initiative. She currently works as Asst. Professor of English at Nehru College, Kasaragod, Kerala. She completed her PhD from the Central University of Kerala

Navigating Identity: Surveillance, Social Control, and Body Image in Postmillennial Indian Lesbian and Trans Narratives

Neha Kumari

Sri Balaji University, India



Abstract:

In India, lesbian and trans bodies are often seen as subversive and subjected to significant political control, challenging the heteronormative norms of gender and sexuality. This research explores narratives that portray the struggles and resilience of lesbian and trans women in postmillennial India, focusing on their body image, appearance, and the social control they endure. By examining literary works and autobiographies, the paper investigates how nonbinary desires and aesthetic expressions disrupt traditional gender roles and norms. It highlights the commodification of lesbian identity and the pressure to conform to heteronormative standards, as discussed by scholars like Sridevi Nair. Western critics such as Caroline Huxley and Nikki Hayfield have also observed that alternative sexualities are often policed to fit into an 'authentic' sexuality framework. Through the analysis of protagonists in Manju Kapur's "A Married Woman" and Abha Dawesar's "Babyji," the paper illustrates the internalization of dominant heterosexuality and its impact on body image. Additionally, autobiographical works like Living Smile Vidya's "I Am Vidya," A. Revathi's "The Truth About Me," and Manobi Bandyopadhyay's "A Gift of Goddess Laxmi" offer insights into the lived experiences of trans women navigating their identities in a restrictive cultural setting. This study emphasizes the intersectionality of sex, body image, gender behavior, and desire, showing how lesbian and trans women shape their identities amidst societal pressures, thereby enhancing the understanding of gender and sexuality in contemporary India.

Keywords: *Identity, lesbian, trans bodies, body image, intersectionality*

Biography:

Dr. Neha Kumari is an Assistant Professor at Sri Balaji University, Pune, India. She has completed her Ph.D. from the Indian Institute of Technology (ISM) Dhanbad, availing MHRD (JRF & SRF) Fellowship. She has published her articles in reputed journals and indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, and Q1. Dr. Neha is the editor of *Fat Studies Journal*, Taylor & Francis Indexed in Q1. She is an academic editor of the *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* and an editorial board member of the *Indian Journal of Health, Sexuality, and Culture*. She is a member of the Development Studies Association, UK for research. She has a passion for creative writing and has published a poetry named *My Identity* and a short story titled *My Journey Through Thorns*. Her areas of interest include Gender and Sexuality Studies, Transgender Studies, Cultural Studies, and Women's Studies and Communication.

How gender comes to matter in early childhood: tracing matter, space, place, time and affect in research

Jayne Osgood

Middlesex University, United Kingdom



Abstract:

This chapter re-turns to encounters in early childhood contexts as they are presented by a range of feminist new materialist scholars over the past decade. This body of work underscores the imperative to research gender and sexualities in ways that attend to the more-than-human. Our tracing illustrates that this emergent field of scholarship presents new and generative possibilities for opening out ideas and practices concerning how gender comes to matter in early childhood. Gender is understood expansively so that the organisation of space, the agency of matter, the significance of atmospheric forces that create possibilities to re-imagine gender and sexualities become central to investigation. Dwelling upon the feltness of encounters in early childhood contexts involves paying close attention to forces agitated from emerging, vanishing and transforming affective ecologies. Our objective in this chapter then, is to re-attune to spatiality, flows, intensities and affective stutters; to zoom in and out as a means to illuminate multiple and contradictory gendered forces at play, and to make visible what that might mean for research and practice. While some hegemonic gender formations continue to be privileged we explore how they are at once queered by other affective currents that present ways of becoming gendered otherwise.

Keywords: gender, affect, matter, time, space, posthumanism, more-than-human, childhood

Biography:

Dr. Jayne Osgood is Professor of Childhood Studies at the Centre for Education Research & Scholarship, Middlesex University. Her work addresses issues of worldly justice through critical engagement with policy, curricular frameworks, and pedagogical approaches in Early Childhood Education & Care. She is committed to extending understandings of the workforce, families, gender and sexualities, 'child', and 'childhood' in early years contexts through creative, affective methodologies. She has published extensively within the post-modernist paradigm with over 100 publications in the form of books, chapters and journal papers, her most recent books include *Postdevelopmental Approaches to Childhood Research Observation* (2023); *Feminists Researching Gendered Childhoods* (2019); and *Postdevelopmental Approaches to Childhood Art* (2019). She has served on the editorial boards of various journals and is a long-standing board member at *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*. She is currently editor for the journals: *Gender & Education* and *Reconceptualising Education Research Methodology*. She is also Book Series Editor for both Bloomsbury (*Feminist Thought in Childhood Research*; and *Postdevelopmental Approaches to Childhood*) and Springer (*Keythinkers in Education*).

A Postcolonial Analysis of Colonial Feminism: The Ongoing Colonization of Muslim Women's Bodies

Jyhene Kebsi

Macquarie University, Australia



Abstract:

On March 11th, 2013, the Tunisian ex-Femen member Amina Sboui posted a bare-breasted photo of herself on Facebook. Sboui's topless photo created a big controversy in Tunisia where most Tunisians felt shocked and irritated by it. In order to support Sboui, the topless group Femen launched an International Topless Jihad campaign during which its members asked women to post bare-chested pictures of themselves so that they express their solidarity with Sboui and other "oppressed" Muslim women. The rhetoric and tactics of Femen associated veiling with oppression and unveiling with liberation. Femen's Islamophobic speech offended Muslim women worldwide. My presentation offers an evaluation of Femen's potential to achieve change in Tunisia. I argue that while Sboui's bare-breasted activism contributes to the diversity of Tunisian feminist activism, the topless method advocated by Femen is counter-productive in this Muslim-majority country. Accordingly, my speech gives an overview of the long struggle for women's rights in Tunisia in order to show the absence of a need for Femen's imperial "saving." The analysis discusses Femen's contradictory topless feminism through a focus on the inconsistencies and inaccuracies of the group's "liberatory" campaign. My presentation explores the ineffectiveness of bare-breasted feminism and its inability to advance women's rights in Tunisia.

Biography:

Dr. Jyhene Kebsi is the MA Convenor of the Gender Studies Program at Macquarie University in Australia. Dr. Kebsi's research has appeared in the *Journal of World Literature*, *Antipodes: A Global Journal of Australian/New Zealand Literature*, the *Journal of Global Postcolonial Studies*, *Postcolonial Text*, *Law & Literature* and the *Journal of North African Studies*. Her op-eds have appeared in key outlets like *The Berkley Forum*, *The Conversation*, *Overland*, *The New Arab*, *Jadaliyyah* and *Arena*. Dr. Kebsi is the recipient of multiple prizes and awards, including Fulbright.

Culture and Healing

Evelyne Accad

Home of Tenderness: BeitelHanane, Lebanon

Abstract:

The new project Culture and Healing Center presents itself as the crowning achievement of Evelyne Accad, President of Beit el Fouad Foundation. As Professor Emerita of the University of Illinois and of the Lebanese American University, a writer engaged for peace, justice and women's rights, the Lebanese-Swiss-American artist has never stopped working for a wholesome society. Friendship, tolerance, generosity, gentleness, unity and fraternity are, in her eyes, keys for the freedom of Lebanon and its enlightenment.



In 2008, Evelyne Accad and her sister Jacqueline Hajjar founded The House of Tenderness (Beit el Hanane), an association to which the writer has moreover devoted a collection of short stories published by L'Harmattan, in 2021. With Beit el Fouad, Evelyne Accad intends to dynamically pursue her quest of a nation purified of the nuisances that corrode citizen harmony: the cessation of violence certainly requires testimony, but mainly action, condition sine qua non of change, more so, transformation. It is therefore important to denounce the social abuse by working in the field, through an anthology of cultural, artistic and healing ways. The Journey to Equality and Homeostasis takes on a new name from the pen of the author: « Femi-humanism ». In her essay Women, Men and War. Fiction and Reality at Middle East – winner of the France-Lebanon prize from ADEL in 1994, the writer explains her pacifist vision: « [...] This is how a new movement is conceptualized associating a “(femi)humanism” (I use this expression in preference to feminism, because men and women must work together for things change) with a reformed nationalism, rid of male chauvinism, war and violence. » (1993, 41).

It is in this conciliatory perspective that the humanist mission of Beit el Fouad fits: targeting the healing of many traumas – related to war, family, exile, environment, pandemic, inflation, etc. – through culture and therapy (writing, theatre, reading, music, singing, painting, engraving, circus activities, physical and spiritual exercises, coaching, cooking, gardening, etc.). It is also a question of revivifying and polishing the rhizomes of the country of Cedar, by giving hope to citizens, certainly resilient, but bruised by so many years of war and chaos. They will be able to benefit from means to rejuvenate in Beit el Fouad, a Center that puts balm to the heart. Artistic, cultural and ecological, Beit el Fouad is conceived above all as a space of union and tranquillity between the communities; it invites participation through various workshops, seminars, exhibitions, concerts, plays, cine-clubs and other formative activities. Moreover, a library room, music, dance, psychotherapy, physiotherapy spaces, etc. will be accessible to the public. Filled with compassionate understanding, such environment hopes to reflect on the individual, as a whole being in its vital role for society. Beit el Fouad is thus at the antipodes of political sectarianism and any system of coercion that generate inter-community religious conflicts, segregation and corruption.

Furthermore, the restoration of a house in the locality of Achrafieh, in memory of the port of Beirut explosion's victims, symbolizes resistance to the evils that beset the Lebanese. Encouraging (re)creation prevents destruction. Under the aegis of multidisciplinary, many founding projects are designed in collaboration with institutions, artists, creators, thinkers from Lebanon and around the world. Committed since 1965 in several academic, cultural and social networks, Evelyne Accad relies on the support of several organizations, in addition to embassies. Eager to put heart in her project, the Founder of the Beit el Fouad Foundation wishes to continue her quest, despite the stumbling blocks of life, and this, with the association of humanitarian organizations who try – just like her – to build bridges of hope towards a Horizon of Light.

Women Fought Back: Independent Female Individuals in Late Medieval and Early Modern Literature

Dr. Albrecht Classen

University of Arizona, United States



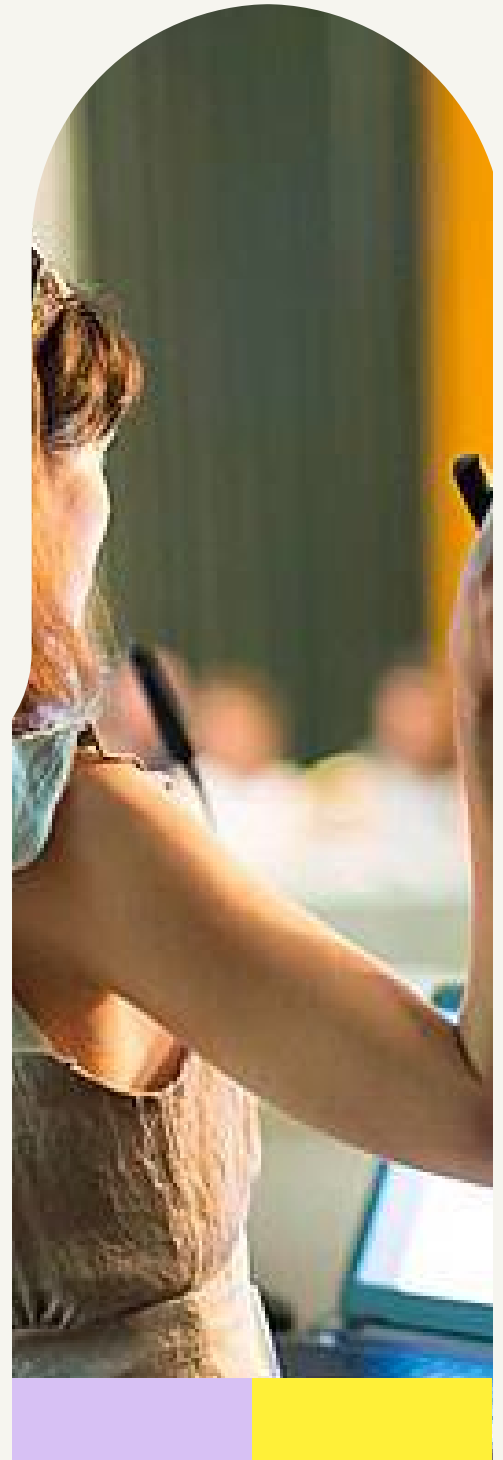
Abstract:

Contrary to many modern notions about women's history in the pre-modern age, we find numerous female individuals who proved to be exercise much intellectual influence and political power. Although patriarchy was certainly the official social structure, this should not mislead us to assume that hence all women were subjugated. As recent research has documented, already in the early and high Middle Ages, numerous queens can be identified who held enormous power. This did not come to an end in the late Middle Ages and early modern age either (see, e.g., Queen Elizabeth I). This talk will examine what we know about the presentation of women in late medieval and early modern literature as a corrective or complement to the historical records. The main figures to be brought to light are famous Christine de Pizan, Margery Kempe, Joan of Arc, Helene Kottannerin, Elisabeth von Nassau-Saarbruecken, and Argula von Grumbach. All of them made their voices heard in writing, though they used a range of textual genres depending on their individual interests. To be sure, we can certainly identify a strong discourse about and by women well before the modern age.

Biography:

ALBRECHT CLASSEN received his Ph.D. from the University of Virginia in 1986. He has a broad range of research interests covering the history of German and European literature from about 800 to 1600. He has currently published 132 books and well over 800 articles dealing with comparative issues, gender topics, environmental concerns, and cultural historical themes. Most recently appeared *Prostitution in Medieval and Early Modern Literature* (2021), *Charlemagne in Medieval German and Dutch Literature* (2021), *Tracing the Trails in the Medieval World* (2021), *Wisdom from the European Middle Ages* (2022), *The Secret in Medieval Literature* (2022), *Globalism in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age* (ed., 2023), and *Der Niederrheinische Orientbericht, c. 1350* (trans., 2024). A new book on court criticism and of evil kings in medieval literature appeared in 2024. In 2017, he received the rank of Grand Knight Commander of the Most Noble Order of the Three Lions.

Oral Presentations



Use of Bioresonance Treatment Among Women and its Relation to Body and Self Conceptualizations

Melin Levent Yuna

Acibadem University, Turkey

Abstract:

Perception of body and health and its relation to self are among the topics that are taking a lot of attention lately with a noticeable rise in interest in unorthodox medical treatments, such as bioresonance, particularly in urban areas. Istanbul, in particular, has seen a growing number of clinics and hospitals offering bioresonance therapy, and patients seeking the support of bioresonance. One point that clearly attracts my attention is that notably, the majority of patients, approximately more than 80%, of those seeking and utilizing this treatment are women.

Then, my observation raises a question: Why is there an increasing demand for bioresonance in Istanbul, especially among women, despite the city's extensive network of well-equipped private and public hospitals, polyclinics, and doctors providing conventional orthodox medical care supported by state social security?

The aim of my presentation in this congress is to provide a partial explanation to this question. Therefore, I will focus on how the bioresonance treatment is perceived and how it relates to users' conceptualizations of their bodies and selves since this is an important dimension to answer my question in addition to state policy regarding unorthodox unconventional medicine.

My presentation for this congress is based on analysis of 15 in-depth interviews I conducted with women in Istanbul who use bioresonance therapy, as well as insights from one bioresonance doctor and one distributor of Bioresonance machines.

Biography:

Dr. Melin Levent Yuna holds undergraduate and graduate degrees in Sociology and a PhD in Cultural Anthropology. She has taught at various universities in Istanbul and currently serves as a professor at Acibadem University. In addition to her academic roles, Dr. Yuna has worked as a research project manager and academic consultant for prominent research firms in Istanbul, including TRIO, TNS, GFK, Ipsos, and Futurebright. She also contributed to the World Health Organization's anthropological Health Care Research Project in Turkey.

Dr. Yuna has published articles in esteemed journals in Turkey and the United Kingdom, including the Journal of Social History (Toplumsal Tarih), Journal of Society and Science (Toplum ve Bilim), Journal of Anatolian Folk Beliefs, and the Edinburgh University Dance Research Journal. She has authored book chapters and books in Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the USA. Her most recent book, "Tango and the Dancing Body in Istanbul", is published by Routledge – Taylor and Francis. Currently, Dr. Yuna is researching the use of unorthodox medicine in Turkey and how it relates to contemporary self and perception of body.

Transforming International Organisations (IOs) mainstreaming policy strategy for gender inclusivity in the ICT sector in the Global North and South

Jolanda Robinson

University of Amsterdam (AISSR), Netherlands

Abstract:

As global gender mainstreaming policy strategy enters its third decade of operationalization, IOs, international development organisations (IDOs) and national states can be moving discursively beyond mainstreaming to address gender inequalities in the ICT sector. The past decades reveal enduring asymmetrical gender representation in the ICT professions and decision-making roles within the sector. The contested nature of mainstreaming and limited visibility of these professions in Section J of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) factor into the dynamics of IOs support. Drawing from critical International Relations, Feminist and Development theory, IOs support and activities in the ICT sector are framed to support feminist and emancipatory social forces with mainstreaming practices. This presentation engages ideas about counterhegemonic movements aiming to overcome gendered status quo in the ICT sector, buttressed by mainstreaming strategies in the Global North and South. It concludes that in this contested period of dominant global neoliberal practices, IOs can nonetheless use transformative mainstreaming practices while disaggregating data at intersections of identity relevant to the status of gender representation in the ICT sector in national state contexts for targeted interventions. Moreover, IOs can increase the visibility of their projects, practices and collaborative activities to intervene in national state, civil society and business contexts to support national and transnational ICT movements. Such activities can lay the groundwork to transform existing mainstreaming practices and promote strategies to counter global neoliberal practices and their predominant focus on integration more than inclusivity in the ICT sector.

Biography:

Jolanda Robinson is completing her PhD at the University of Amsterdam at the Governance and Inclusive Development Group (GID) within the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR). Her thesis is titled “International Organisations, Development Cooperation, and the Challenges of Gender Mainstreaming Policy Strategy for ICT in the Global North and South: The case of Ethiopia”. She is a member of the African European Partnership Institute for Capability Building and Human Resource Development (APICAB). Jolanda has taught media communications, gender studies and English as a second language in China. Her research focuses on IOs, gender and ICT issues, policy processes, ICT governance and social participation.

These Traitors Have Been Brainwashed: Nationalist Discourse Interwined with Anti-Feminism on Chinese Social Media

Pei Zhong

Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

Abstract:

Recent years have witnessed a notable intensification of online anti-feminism, and while a considerable body of literature has scrutinised the strategies employed to criticise and suppress feminist ideologies, relatively little attention has been paid to the intersection of anti-feminism and nationalism. This article seeks to explore the extent to which nationalist discourse intertwines with anti-feminism on Chinese social media platforms. To address this issue, data were collected from Zhihu, China's most prominent community-based question-and-answer forum. Through the application of critical discourse analysis, four distinct ways in which nationalist rhetoric converges with online anti-feminism in China are identified: feminists are portrayed as being indoctrinated by foreign hostile forces, as betraying socialism or the nation while advocating for capitalism and consumerism, as excessively idolising foreigners while disparaging the local populace, and as contributing to a decline in fertility rates, ultimately threatening the extinction of the Chinese nation. The article underscores a form of anti-feminism that derives its strength from nationalist sentiments and stresses the importance of situating such phenomena within their broader historical and socio-political contexts. Moreover, the findings contribute to the potential development of a typology delineating the fusion of nationalism and anti-feminism, both within China and in a broader global context.

Biography:

Pei Zhong is currently a master student at the Free University of Berlin, Department of History and Cultural Studies. His research interests involve sociology of gender, sociology of education, political sociology, and the sociology of labour. As of August 2024, he has presented 10 papers at esteemed sociology academic conferences, including, but not limited to, the American Sociological Association Annual Meeting and the ISA World Congress of Sociology.

Young feminists' perception and relationship with the label "feminist" in contemporary Japanese society

Momoko Kagesawa

University of York alumni, United Kingdom

Abstract:

In recent years, people's awareness of women's rights has developed in Japan through the rise of several feminist movements. However, some feminists seem to avoid using the label "feminist" to describe themselves, even though they support ideas that feminists aim to achieve, as seen in other countries as well. This research explores feminists' perception and relationship with the label "feminist" and examines what the use of feminist label means to feminists themselves in Japanese contexts, conducting interviews with Japanese self-identified feminists in the ages of 20s. The findings highlight multiple and entangled aspects that would impact feminists' identities and attitudes toward the feminist label both positively and negatively, as well as their struggles to pursue feminist lives in Japan.

Biography:

Pei Zhong is currently a master student at the Free University of Berlin, Department of History and Cultural Studies. His research interests involve sociology of gender, sociology of education, political sociology, and the sociology of labour. As of August 2024, he has presented 10 papers at esteemed sociology academic conferences, including, but not limited to, the American Sociological Association Annual Meeting and the ISA World Congress of Sociology.

Spiritual Resilience and Gendered Oppression: The Experiences of Sudanese Enslaved Women in the Nineteenth Century

Rawan E A Mohamed

University of Leeds, United Kingdom

Abstract:

This paper explores the experiences of Sudanese enslaved women during the nineteenth century, focusing on the implications of slavery practices and their responses through religious spiritualism. The trans-Saharan and Red Sea slave trades significantly impacted Sudanese women, who were trafficked as domestic laborers, concubines, and agricultural workers across the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, and Arabia. Their roles were shaped by the gendered nature of slavery, where women faced unique forms of exploitation, including sexual violence, forced reproduction, and erasure of familial bonds. These oppressive conditions, however, did not entirely suppress their agency. Sudanese enslaved women turned to Islamic spiritualism and Sufi practices as means of survival, resistance, and self-preservation. By engaging in communal rituals, spiritual healing, and the invocation of divine intervention, they carved out spaces of autonomy within the constraints of bondage. This paper argues that religious spiritualism served not only as a form of psychological resilience but also as a subtle challenge to the dehumanizing institution of slavery. By contextualizing these women's spiritual practices within broader African diasporic religious movements, the study highlights the intersection of gender, spirituality, and resistance in the lived experiences of Sudanese enslaved women. The findings offer critical insights into the resilience of enslaved women and their strategies for navigating the intersecting oppressions of gender, race, and slavery.

Shattering the Stoic Facade: Exploring the Paradox of Masculinity Myths and Challenging the "Men Don't Cry" Stereotype in Modern Society

Angeline Sibongile Ngcobo

University of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa

Abstract:

This paper aims to challenge the patriarchal system and cultural norms that perpetuate the belief that men don't cry to promote healthy relationships, decrease gender-based violence, and improve community well-being. The concept of a stoic, mentally strong man dates back to ancient cultures. It is associated with cultural and societal norms on masculinity, which dictate that men should not express their feelings of grief or cry, as the isiZulu infamous saying, "Indoda Ayikhali" (meaning men don't cry). As a result, our understanding of masculinity poses a significant obstacle for men in modern society. Men are taught that their worth lies in their ability to be strong, in control, and succeed. Therefore, this paper challenges gender stereotypes and redefines masculinity in the modern era while examining the evolving context of gender roles and expectations.

This paper adopts the Hegemonic Masculinity Theory to challenge and confront difficulties created by masculinity stereotypes. In addition, this conceptual paper used an integrative review approach to construct a new perspective regarding gender stereotypes through synthesising knowledge in extant literature. It, therefore, utilised secondary data available in the public domain to find patterns, identify knowledge gaps and generate new perspectives.

Conclusion: We argue that men carry a lot of pain, anger, and bitterness due to suppressing their emotions to conform to cultural norms. Therefore, the notion of "men don't cry" is connected to gender-based violence due to its support of the stoic facade.

Keywords: *Gender-based violence, Masculinity, Paradoxes, Stereotype, Stoic Facade*

Biography:

Dr. Angeline Sibongile Ngcobo is a multidisciplinary social science researcher with a Ph.D. in Community Development. She works at the Human Sciences Research Council and has extensive knowledge of research implementation. In addition, Dr Ngcobo has experience lecturing community development studies and has supervised Honours, PGD, and Master's level students in the School of Built Environment and Development Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. She has published and submitted numerous journal articles and book chapters to be published in 2024. Moreover, she has presented her research at two international research conferences. Her research chiefly focuses on community engagement, participation, gender-based violence, Afrocentricity, Ubuntu, and policy interventions for vulnerable populations.

The grit and determination in cross-border mobility: Threats facing women of refugees and labour migrants in South Africa

Zilungile Pearl Mbatha

University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Abstract:

Human mobility and the refugee crisis have been and are increasingly becoming a thorny issue worldwide. An unprecedented 65.6 million people are forced to leave their countries of origin, some as labour (economic) migrants and nearly 22.5 million refugees (UNHCR). Not even the tragedies of capsizing boats, crocodile-infested rivers, long walking hours, corrupt border officials, nor any global pandemic can deter migrants and asylum seekers from reaching their destination. The dangerously vulnerable groups in this are women and children. This paper explores the untold stories of toils and troubles that refugee women and women of economic migrants go through in their determination to get to the host countries. It also seeks to highlight the issues of integration that refugee women face as mothers, and mostly single mothers in the receiving country. As vulnerable groups, women would likely seek protection from the men that they meet in the host country, which in some cases would be detrimental to their independence and even their safety. The driving force behind emigration (pushing forces) and beyond popular belief that it is mostly about chasing a better lifestyle, will also be highlighted. The potential hazards and dangers to lives that these groups go through as they navigate their way to their "safe haven," as articulated first-hand, would perhaps shed some light. It would possibly change people's perceptions of migration's driving forces within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. This paper highlights the importance of integrating women asylum seekers and refugees to ease their psychological burden. The paper uses primary data collected from focus group interviews of asylum seekers and refugees affiliated to Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Faith-based Organizations (FBOs) which are involved in integrating these groups, as well as desktop review of published journals and articles.

Keywords: *refugees, asylum seekers, labour migrants, cross-border migrants, deterrents, xenophobia, grit and determination.*

Biography:

Dr Zilungile Pearl Mbatha is a lecturer in the Department of Community Development, School of Built Environment and Development Studies (SOBEDS) in the University of KwaZulu-Natal(UKZN). She is also a Registered Counsellor in Psychology in private practice, registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) and the Board of Healthcare Funders (BHF) respectively. Dr Mbatha has extensive experience in teaching, both in Basic Education and Academic environments. She worked mostly with previously disadvantaged students in rural and township schools for 27 years prior to accepting a position as a lecturer at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. She holds a four-year Diploma in Education, a Bachelor of Arts degree, and an Honours degree in Psychology from the University of South Africa, a Master's degree in Social Sciences from UKZN. Her PhD thesis in Community and Development Studies from UKZN is titled "Evaluating the effectiveness of refugees integration strategies in South African urban communities in EThekweni and Mbombela." As a researcher, she has published and is in the process of publishing articles in journals and has presented a paper in an international conference on Safer Cities in 2021. Dr Mbatha teaches modules from first level to third level of study in the department of Community Development and supervises postgraduate students in the same discipline. She is a member of various committees within the school of Built Environment representing her department, among others the Teaching and Learning committee and Community Engagement for Project Renewal.

A Qualitative Look at Work and Retirement Patterns for Grandmothers Caring for Grandchildren with Disabilities

Madonna Harrington Meyer

Syracuse University, United States

Abstract:

Using a life course perspective that emphasizes the impact of cumulative inequalities on grandmothers who care for grandchildren with disabilities, we use in-depth interviews to assess work and retirement patterns. Over 50% of U.S. grandparents provide financial assistance to their adult children and grandchildren; 39% provide grandchild care; and 31% help with errands, housework, and home repairs (Livingston and Parker 2010). These rates are higher for the 17% of US children who have disabilities (CDC 2017). Why do US grandparents do so much? Igel and Szydik's (2011) comparison of different country policies found that where state supports to working families are more extensive, grandparents provide less care. The US lacks federal policies that guarantee paid sick days, vacations, or parental leaves, subsidized childcare, or health insurance. We identify three work and retirement patterns. (1) Many alter their work schedules, using paid time off to care for their grandchildren, coming in late, leaving early, bringing grandchildren to work, calling in sick, using vacation days, bringing work home, or working weekends to provide care for their grandchildren with disabilities; (2) Some work more years or hours than they need to minimize grandchild care; and (3) Some retire earlier than they can afford to care for grandchildren with disabilities. Over ¼ of our respondents either stop working or reduce work hours. As cumulative inequality theory suggests those with the greatest resources and the fewest demands tend to fare well, those with the fewest resources and the greatest demands tend to experience adverse impacts.

Biography:

Madonna Harrington Meyer is University Professor at Syracuse University. She is professor of sociology at the Maxwell School of Public Affairs and Laura J. and L. Douglas Meredith Professor of Teaching Excellence. She is senior research associate at the Center for Policy Research, faculty affiliate at the Aging Studies Institute, and Faculty Research Affiliate at the Lerner Center. She is co-author and editor of numerous books including, with Ynesse Abdul-Malak, *Grandparenting Children with Disabilities* (2020).

A Qualitative Look at Work and Retirement Patterns for Grandmothers Caring for Grandchildren with Disabilities

Ynesse Abdul-Malak

Colgate University, United States

Abstract:

Using a life course perspective that emphasizes the impact of cumulative inequalities on grandmothers who care for grandchildren with disabilities, we use in-depth interviews to assess work and retirement patterns. Over 50% of U.S. grandparents provide financial assistance to their adult children and grandchildren; 39% provide grandchild care; and 31% help with errands, housework, and home repairs (Livingston and Parker 2010). These rates are higher for the 17% of US children who have disabilities (CDC 2017). Why do US grandparents do so much? Igel and Szydik's (2011) comparison of different country policies found that where state supports to working families are more extensive, grandparents provide less care. The US lacks federal policies that guarantee paid sick days, vacations, or parental leaves, subsidized childcare, or health insurance. We identify three work and retirement patterns. (1) Many alter their work schedules, using paid time off to care for their grandchildren, coming in late, leaving early, bringing grandchildren to work, calling in sick, using vacation days, bringing work home, or working weekends to provide care for their grandchildren with disabilities; (2) Some work more years or hours than they need to minimize grandchild care; and (3) Some retire earlier than they can afford to care for grandchildren with disabilities. Over ¼ of our respondents either stop working or reduce work hours. As cumulative inequality theory suggests those with the greatest resources and the fewest demands tend to fare well, those with the fewest resources and the greatest demands tend to experience adverse impacts.

Biography:

Ynesse Abdul-Malak is an assistant professor of sociology at Colgate University, NY. She is an award-winning public sociologist. She has published extensively on racial health disparities and grandparenting. Her latest publication is on social determinants of health affecting stroke outcomes.

Red Erotic: Fall and Rise of Indigenous Erotica

Savage Bear

McMaster University, Canada

Abstract:

In the realm of Indigenous erotics, re-imagining encompasses acts of nonconformity, resistance, and subversion. These are alternative ways of envisioning the past, present and future. Indigenous writers and artists are generating new landscapes, and new possibilities of “Indigenous subjectivity, sociality, and spatiality ... a process of creating newness from existing materials, seemingly out of nowhere” (Rifkin 99). While Rifkin states these new possibilities come from seemingly ‘nowhere’, there is in fact, a rich Indigenous archive from which to draw from and these landscapes are the collective Indigenous identity stemming from individual and collective experiences of Indigenous people. Re-imaginings do not conform to the current logics of settler colonial power; they resist the colonial ‘managing’ of Indians by the Indian Act and avoid impositions of legal definitions of our selves. Re-imaginings are also subversive actions taken up by Indigenous authors to disrupt colonial stereotypes. This talk presents Indigenous erotics as a state of re-imagining the corporeal coalescence of our sexualities, genders, histories, memories and emotions, and functions as a powerful decolonizing mechanism.

Biography:

Savage Bear is a rabble-rouser, Nehiyaw’iskwew (Cree woman) and member of the Montreal Lake Cree Nation in northern Saskatchewan. She is the Director for the McMaster Indigenous Research Institute (MIRI) and is an Assistant Professor within the Indigenous Studies Department. Savage is also the National Director of Walls to Bridges; an education program bringing post-secondary education to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated folks. Prior to arriving at McMaster in 2021, Bear worked at the University of Alberta, where she was the Director of the Indigenous Women & Youth Resilience Project and the academic lead on ‘Indigenous Canada,’ a highly successful online course boasting over 540,000 learners; she was also an assistant professor of Native Studies and Women’s and Gender Studies.

An accomplished academic, Bear has made significant contributions to Indigenous scholarship and the national Indigenous education landscape since earning her PhD from the University of Alberta in 2016. Her dissertation, ‘Power in My Blood: Corporeal Sovereignty through the Praxis of an Indigenous Eroticanalysis’ won the highly coveted Governor General Gold Medal. Her current research includes social justice, prison abolition, body sovereignty, sexuality, gender and reproductive justice, contemporary Indigenous art, and Indigenous literature. When she is not marking, teaching or enjoying her new role as Kookum (grandmother) you will find her literally chasing waterfalls around Hamilton’s amazing trails with her dog, Odin.

Policy Analysis of Under Age Marriage in Saudi Arabia

Wafa Alhajri

St. Ambrose University, United States

Abstract:

Underage marriage is a common practice in the Muslim world. In Saudi Arabia, this controversial dialogue has been taking place in the Shura Council 2011. A few years ago, the father had the absolute right to arrange the marriage according to the Sharia law. Girls have been married off at age ten and sometimes even younger. Some have been married to men who were more than over 60 years old.

Shura Council presented its suggested regulations to the Council of Senior Clerics for consideration. Council of Senior Clerics commented that the marriage of girls under 15 years old is permitted in Islam, and there is nothing wrong with it and here is no intention to discuss this issue. It has been a battle between the Shura Council and the Council of Senior Clerics for years. Finally, in 2022, underage marriage is illegal and punishable by law. The guardian and the older spouse face imprisonment and/or a fine. However, there are exceptions where the court can approve the marriage by processing an online application to the court. The Marriage contract is through the court, and the judge verifies the approval by explicit acknowledgment. The mother's opinion is taken. A medical report is required to prove physical and mental completeness, and a psychological and social report must prove parity between the couple.

Coercion is still likely in some cases. The consent of people involved can be a response to traditional customs and the beliefs of families, where clans and tribes can put pressure on people to conform. The lack of awareness about a child's needs and rights encourages poor decision-making.

Biography:

Wafa Alhajri, PhD is Assistant Professor of Social Work at St. Ambrose University. Her study area is women empowerment, the social work needs of Muslim women, systemic oppression, religious based bullying, and minority and diverse populations.

Gender, Sexuality and Constitutional Reform in Barbados

Latoya Lazarus

The University of the West Indies, Barbados

Abstract:

The Republic of Barbados is currently undergoing the process of constitutional reform, as part of its transition from a constitutional monarchy to a republic. Drawing on secondary data collected from the 2023 Barbados National LGBTI Survey, as well as from eight in-depth interviews with locally based sexual and gender rights activists, and discussions emerging out of the Barbados constitutional reform townhall meetings, this discussion considers the potential of law for advancing greater inclusivity of marginalized groups within the Barbadian society. Specifically, we examine the credence placed in law as a potential tool for safeguarding greater social inclusion, rights and protection for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) people in Barbados. In so doing, we focus on LGBTQ+ people's perceptions and/or experiences of legal reforms relating to gender and/or sexual orientation in Barbados. We highlight LGBTQ+ activists' participation in the ongoing constitutional reform process, focusing on both the opportunities that were made available for their meaningful participation and the challenges encountered. We thus argue that participating in the constitutional reform process may have provided some marginalized LGBTQ+ groups/individuals with invaluable opportunities to share their experiences and interests as well as to potentially influence the outcomes of this consequential process. However, they also faced various hindrances, including having to navigate, at times, hostile opposition and a legal process that has traditionally reflected and served the interests and ideologies of the most powerful. These hindrances may impede some groups and individuals' meaningful participation and their faith in the constitutional reform process.

Biography:

Latoya Lazarus completed a PhD in Sociology from York University. She is currently a Research Fellow at the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies at the University of the West Indies (The UWI), Cave Hill Campus, Barbados. Latoya's research straddles the Sociology of Religion, Citizenship and Sexualities Studies. In particular, her research and publications interrogate the influence of Christian FBOs' ideologies and mobilization on sexual politics and law reform in the Anglophone Caribbean.

Breaking the Boundaries of gender and sexuality: Exploring Trans Joy in the redlight area of Peshawar Pakistan

Alamgir

Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Australia

Abstract:

This article explores the concept of "trans joy" and its manifestation within the red-light areas taking the case of transgender hub known as Iqbal Plaza which is situated in the heart of central business area of Peshawar Pakistan. Using a qualitative research methodology, the research project engaged 10 Khawaja sara and Hijra in a face-to-face direct interview, particularly residing within the communal spaces described as trans red-light hub in Peshawar city. By centring the voices and narratives of participants, the study developed the nuance understanding of trans joy, resilience, and community building within a situation which is marked by social stigma and discrimination. Drawing on the insights from postcolonial and Queer theory, the findings shine the multifaceted nature of trans joy, highlighting the importance of communal spaces like Iqbal Plaza in providing support, safety, and a sense of belonging for transgender communities whilst introducing the gender and sexuality in Postcolonial Islamic Pakistan. Additionally, the study sheds light on the challenges and complexities inherent in these spaces, including issues of violence, exploitation, and access to basic rights and services. Ultimately, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of transgender experiences in Peshawar and underscores the need for culturally sensitive interventions that support the well-being and empowerment of transgender individuals in Pakistan.

Biography:

Dr. Alamgir has a PhD degree from RMIT University Melbourne with a research interest in the field of Gender, Sexuality, and Education. His PhD thesis entitled Khawaja Sara and Hijra: Gender and sexual identity formation in postcolonial Islamic Pakistan investigated and located the identities of Khawaja Sara and Hijra within pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial contexts in order to challenge the ways in which their lives are understood by scholars and policy makers in Pakistan. His work is jointly published in international journal of transgender health. Dr. Alamgir lives in Melbourne Australia.

Editorial Labour: Feminised Mending, Feminist Making

Rose Michael

Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Australia

Abstract:

The role of the editor has long been characterised as invisible, making editors the ‘hidden handmaidens’ of Australian publishing. Pre-eminent Australian editor Beatrice Davis AM, MBE (appointed to read proofs at Angus & Robertson in 1937, before going on to become Australia’s first full-time book editor) famously called editing ‘invisible mending’. Hillary McPhee AO (co-founder of ‘one of the most prestigious independent Australian publishing houses’ with Diane Gribble in 1973) entitled her memoir *Other People’s Words*. Text Publishing’s senior editor, Mandy Brett, wrote as late as 2011 that the editor is only a reader – albeit an ideal one – whose role is working (with the author) to make any and every book ‘the best conceivable version of itself’. More recently Alice Grundy has argued that ‘keeping the editor’s work invisible’ results in and is the result of a feminisation of editorial labour. There are ample examples of more masculinist ‘mastery’ of, and over, the manuscript (Gordon Lish, Ted Hughes, Ezra Pound) but replacing metaphors of midwifery with those of surgery still hide an editor’s – or editorial collective’s – essential contribution to bookmaking. This intentional invisibility serves Romantic notions of sole authorship, in keeping with copyright law – which, in turn, serve capitalist markets and a neoliberal economy. While Grundy is not the first to propose our names be added to the imprint page (as publishers often do in the cookbook category), we four professional editors, along with Brett, suspect such a step may simply, subtly reinforce the misperception of our work as fundamentally ‘paratextual’ – to use Genette’s phrase, coined to categorise exactly and only the ‘external’ elements a publisher contributes to a manuscript that is understood as entirely the author’s output. We see our work as editors – in the Australian sense, where such individuals commission and are often publishers in all but name – as an aspect of the creative process itself. We believe it is a potential site of radical feminist collaborative practice.

Biography:

Author of *The Asking Game* and *The Art of Navigation*, Rose Michael is Program Director of the BA (Creative Writing) at RMIT. She has been editor of the national trade press journal *The Weekly Book Newsletter* and *Books + Publishing* magazine, commissioning editor at Hardie Grant Books, and co-founder of micro-press Arcade Publications. She has written about local independent publishing in *Logos: Journal of the World Publishing Industry* and with colleagues in *Book Publishing in Australia: A Living Legacy*.

Media Discourse on Sexuality-Unraveling Bisexuality Representation in the Film 'Cobalt Blue'

Marian Dias

CHRIST (Deemed to be University) Bangalore, India

Abstract:

This article offers a glimpse into the cultural production of sexuality and the representation of bisexuality through media. The initial section provides an overview of the discourse surrounding sexuality in LGBTQ films within media platforms, emphasizing controversial aspects. The author delineates the distinctions between heteronormativity, homonormativity, and the negative stereotyping of bisexuality. The movie chosen as a case study for this article is 'Cobalt Blue'. A distinction is made between two selected films "Ka Bodyscapes, (2018)" exploring homosexuality, and "Cobalt Blue, (2018)" which explores homosexuality and bisexuality. The films were chosen because they were released during the same period, 2018, post the de-criminalization of section 377 and sparked controversies within the public domain. These films serve as exemplars depicting the contrast between socially accepted homosexuality, unacceptable homosexuality, and bisexuality, highlighting moralistic discourses surrounding the binary construction of sexuality. The research aims to present an insightful examination of the moralistic discourse on sexuality in India, particularly within popular culture, shedding light on the negative portrayal of bisexuality. This portrayal is depicted as conflicting with moralistic standards, constructing a facade and discouraging sexual diversity by adhering to a binary conception of acceptable sexuality. The author concludes by reflecting on the discursive processes involved in shaping socially acceptable forms of sexuality.

Biography:

Marian Dias, is a Research Scholar at CHRIST (Deemed to be University) in Sociology. She was awarded the prestigious UGC NET Assistant Professor awards in 2017 and 2019. With a passion for teaching, she has taught across various educational institutions. She champions critical thinking and problem-solving skills which she actively applies in her research as well as while teaching students. Her research area includes- Gender, sexuality, post-structuralism, and Ethnography. Beyond academia, she explores India's diverse cultures through travel, fostering her love for learning. Marian also indulges in historical documentaries, finding solace in their transportive narratives, which offer glimpses into particular social dynamics.

Gender Norms in *The Atmospherians* (2021) by Alex McElroy and *Celestial Bodies* (2018) by Jokha Alharthi

Walid Abdallah Rezk

Suez University, Egypt

Abstract:

Both novels delve into societal norms and expectations, particularly related to gender roles and cultural dynamics. *The Atmospherians* examines societal pressures on women's bodies and appearances, it explores contemporary issues of masculinity, toxic behaviors, and societal pressures, offering a critique of gender norms, while *Celestial Bodies* explores the lives of women within Omani society across different generations, examining their struggles with tradition, patriarchy, self-empowerment, and the traditional expectations placed upon them. Applying feminist literary criticism would involve analyzing how each author portrays and challenges gender roles within their respective cultural contexts.

Biography:

Walid Abdallah is an Egyptian poet and author. He is a visiting professor of English language and literature in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the USA, his poetry includes "Go Ye Moon", "The Queen of my Heart", "Dream" and "My Heart Oasis". His books include *Shout of Silence*, *Escape to the Realm of Imagination*, *The Egyptian Lane* and *Man Domination and Woman Emancipation*, *Arc and Seam* and his co-translations with Andy Fogle of Farouk Goweda's poetry have previously appeared in *Image*, *RHINO*, *Reunion: Dallas Review*, and *Los Angeles Review*. These translations won prestigious prizes in the USA like "Cause", "Egypt's Grief", and "Strangers' Cross".

Sexual violence during the genocidal process and its aftermath

Anthonie Holslag

Freelancer Researcher, Netherlands

Abstract:

During genocides sexualized violence against women takes a very peculiar roll. The atrocities that occur are not merely physical but also symbolic. This is because genocidal violence is highly ritualized. In order to understand this, we have to look at the unique elements in the whole genocide. This does not occur in one genocide specific. We see it during all genocides in the Twentieth and Twenty-first century. The crimes committed during genocides are often more gruesome and evasive. To understand this, we have to look at the breeding ground and mechanisms of genocide themselves and its main objectives. Genocide is a specific crime that differs from war crimes and crimes against humanity.

During my presentation I will try to shed some light in this development. I will do this by comparing the Armenian genocide and the genocide on the Kurds in Iraq, Bosnia and Bangladesh. I will also discuss the enormity of this trauma and why certain techniques used by victims of war victims or people traumatized by crimes against humanity does not have the same effect for victims who survived a genocide.

Due to cultural taboos and constraints females often do not seek help. In other cases, they are even ignored and omitted by politicians, policymakers or activists. They are simply not included. This deepens the pain, with no resolution. They are sometimes even forgotten by those that seek recognition. This makes their pain culturally silenced. Pain that will not resolve, will have again enormous personal and cultural consequences for communities and society as a whole. In my presentation I will talk about the violence and how we can place this in the genocide continuum. I will further discuss the dire circumstances these women live in.

Their suffering is truly forgotten.

Biography:

Anthonie Holslag finished his Anthropology degree with Honours. He specialized in international conflicts and received his doctorate in genocide studies. He has since published 27 articles, several chapters and two books. He also held a speech at the UN for the recognition of the genocide in Bangladesh. He worked and taught about genocide at the University Utrecht, University of Amsterdam and the Vrije Universiteit. He also held lectures in Buenos Aires, Yerevan, Siena, London, Geneva and Dhaka. He is sometimes asked for fact finding missions or is asked for an advisory role. He is also a member of the International Association of Genocide Scholars.

Breaking Chains: BDSM events, inclusive community with exclusionary practices

Jasmine Holmes

University of Wolverhampton, United Kingdom

Abstract:

This study explores the complex nature of inclusivity within BDSM communities. Examining the challenges, exclusionary practices and political discourses the community holds. Utilizing narrative literature analysis, this research synthesizes prior investigations that have explored the community, using an array of materials from different disciplines to provide a holistic view. The findings demonstrate a nuanced understanding of inclusivity within the context of BDSM communities. While the community outwardly appears to be inclusive, it is rooted in power dynamics, policing and political ideologies. One of the biggest divisions within the community is based around the bedrock of safety and consent. Despite these challenges and differences, the community is crucial in providing practitioners with ontological security and support. The festival theme this links to is the notion of inclusive communities, this research attempts to break down this notion and discuss whether inclusivity in this context is achievable and meaningful or instead a fanciful notion that becomes impossible to achieve. Understanding the complexity this community faces has practical implications not solely for researchers, but community organizers, practitioners and educators. By acknowledging the internal divisions, policing and exclusionary practices communities can create more inclusive, safer and open communities for all its members Overall, this research provides a unique exploration of literature, providing valuable insights into a community that is inherently hidden and potentially dangerous. This is not solely for academic exploration but because of the practical implications, this research could help foster safer communities and reduce harm.

Biography:

Jasmine Holmes is a second-year part-time PhD candidate at the University of Wolverhampton. Her doctoral research investigates the use of BDSM practices as a means of reclaiming the alienated self within the proletariat, drawing upon interdisciplinary frameworks that include psychoanalysis, sociology, and philosophy. The paper presented at this conference represents an early stage of her work and is currently under review by the Journal of Sexualities. Jasmine also lectures in sociology at Wolverhampton College and recently participated in the "Beyond Futures" conference hosted by the University of Wolverhampton.

Storying Menopause Using Myth: A Collaborative Autoethnography

Jessica Moriarty

University of Brighton, United Kingdom

Abstract:

Warner writes that fairy tales reflect “lived experience, with a slant towards the tribulations of women.” (Warner, xix) In this presentation, we detail our collaborative autoethnographic (Chang et al, 2018) approach and how we reimagine our lived experience with perimenopause and menopause using fairy tales. In earlier work (Marr and Moriarty, 2023; Marr and Moriarty, 2022; Moriarty and Marr, 2019) we developed stories that - for us - legitimize our experiences as mothers and academics, share ideas, and offer each other solidarity in a way that fits around our busy schedules and produces work (peer-reviewed texts) that is valued by our institution as scholarly activity and research. We argue that this process helps us to avoid the spaces that are synonymous with traditional academic work – white, heteronormative, male, and hierarchical (Moriarty, 2014). It is from here that we are able to discuss our personal experiences of being peri/menopausal women in academia, to be vulnerable, ask for advice, and critique the existing culture – via our conversations and the writing that emerges in a way that nourishes and enhances our creativity, builds our connection as friends/colleagues/collaborators, and restores our sense of self as academics/mothers/artists. We suggest that our method of writing creatively and autoethnographically can help to entice change in women’s lives.

Biography:

Dr Jess Moriarty is a principal lecturer at the University of Brighton where she is course leader on the Creative Writing MA and Co-director for the Centre of Arts and Wellbeing. She has published widely on autoethnography, community engagement and pedagogy in writing practice. Her last book, *Walking for Creative Recovery*, was published in 2022 and her latest book, *Conversations on Creative Process, Methods, Research and Practice*, looks at feminist approaches to supporting the creative self.

Courts are nearly anti-women because they don't want to be seen as anti men - Domestic Abuse survivors' experiences of Contact Proceedings and Family Courts

Katrina McLaughlin

Queen's University, Belfast, United Kingdom

Abstract:

Inter partner violence (IPV) is a global public health crisis (Bradshaw, Gutowski & Nyenyezi, 2024). One third of women will experience IPV in their lifetime and this has significant consequences for their psychological, emotional and physical well-being. Leaving an abusive relationship is a complex process, exacerbated particularly for mothers who face the additional challenge of navigating child custody/contact proceedings in our Family Courts. Despite this being an already stressful and vulnerable time, research indicates that contact/court proceedings may further serve to victimize and retraumatise survivors and children (Gutowski & Goodman, 2000).

The aim of the current research is to explore the experiences of survivors as they navigate court proceedings and supporting institutions in Northern Ireland (NI). To date, there has been no research into women's experiences of court/contact proceedings following allegations of domestic abuse in NI. Seventeen service users of Women's Aid were interviewed. The mean age of the participants was 38.67 years (SD = 7.40). One of the women had one child, 12 of the women had two children and 3 of the women had three children. All of the women were either going through custody court proceedings or had recently completed custody court proceedings. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and the data were analysed using a reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019; 2021).

The findings echo previous research and reveal a systemic gender bias permeating interactions with professionals and processes within the family Courts. Survivors felt they weren't listened to nor believed, and were blamed for what happened to them. In many cases a pro contact approach was adopted in decisions regarding contact, irrespective of whether domestic abuse was alleged or not. This culture of disbelief and victim blaming had negative consequences for both women and their children and highlights the need for a more trauma informed approach in our Family Courts.

Biography:

My research interests centre around parent child interactions and the evaluation of psychosocial interventions aimed at improving outcomes for children and young people. Of particular interest is how adversity affects family processes and the impact on familial and child outcomes. I am experienced in both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, and have worked on a range of evaluations of interventions, aimed at improving the psychological, social, cognitive and educational outcomes for both parents and children.

Reflection as a tool: How teachers' reflections can be used to promote gender equality in primary schools

Amanda Sheehy

University of Worcester, United Kingdom

Abstract:

In primary schools, educators may unknowingly – or unthinkingly – use language or demonstrate behaviour which may perpetuate gender stereotypes. Teachers' contemporary understandings of masculinities and femininities appear to reflect some of the deeply entrenched societal (mis)understandings of how gender must be performed (Sheehy and Solvason, 2023). Since teachers have the ability to shape the views, opinions, and more specifically, the gender construction, of their pupils (Gunderson et al. 2012), it is relevant to understand how teachers' attitudes to gender may evolve and their awareness to the impacts of their behaviour on pupils' attitudes can be heightened.

With an aspiration to minimise the impact of gender stereotypes on future generations, educators have an ethical duty to promote equality (Sheehy, 2023). This study furthers understanding of employing teacher reflection to achieve this aim.

Life history interviews were conducted with 14 teachers who reflected on their own experiences, their attitudes towards gender and the implicit messages given through their pedagogy. The findings showed that teachers' attitudes can change following reflection, resulting in changes to practice. There appeared to be evidence of a three-stage process by which this change occurs. In some cases, individuals may reach a fourth stage in the process, elevating the issue through engagement with other professionals.

The process of reflection on gender construction and pedagogical approach was seen to result in beneficial changes to practice including:

- Consideration of representations of gender in the classroom.
- Use of language.
- Selecting resources which challenge gender stereotypes.
- Alterations to curriculum content or focus.

Biography:

Amanda is an educator, communicator and researcher. She has published journal articles with a focus on promoting equality in primary education. Amanda is an associate lecturer in the Department of Children and Families at the University of Worcester. She has been a teacher since 2006 and continues to teach part time at a primary school. As a result of her PhD research into promoting gender equality in schools, Amanda has developed workshops which she has delivered in primary schools. She continues to conduct educational research focusing on social pedagogy.

The Social Experiences of Women with Visual Impairment in South Africa: A Gendered Perspective

Zimkitha Mahlangu

University of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa

Abstract:

Women with visual impairment are often excluded from community participation, due to barriers that exist in society. The study aimed to investigate the lived social experiences of women with visual impairment. The theory of empowerment was used as a framework to guide the study. Literature on women with visual impairment, the global and national policies on disability inclusion, and intersectional analysis of gender and disability in the South African context were reviewed. The study was conducted in 2020-2021 in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. Ethical clearance was granted by the Human and Social Science Research Ethics Committee at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. Permission to conduct the study was received from the local municipality, Help the Blind and Partially Sighted Society community center, and from the participants. An interpretivism paradigm utilizing qualitative descriptive methodology was employed. Data were collected using in-depth one-on-one interviews. Twenty-one visually impaired women and their caregivers, who were also women, were individually interviewed on their social experiences. The data were then analyzed using thematic analysis. The results revealed that, women with visual impairment experienced challenges that were related to family dynamics, gender-based violence, access to education and employment opportunities, building and maintaining social relations. The lived social experiences of women were compounded by their disability. Gender and disability as identity markers influenced the extent of challenges encountered. Empowering women with visual impairment may increase independence and improve their participation in society.

Keywords: *Social experiences, women with disabilities, visual impairment, intersectionality, and empowerment*

Biography:

Dr Z. Mahlangu (PhD) is a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the School of Built Environment and Development Studies, College of Humanities, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa. Her research interests include disability justice, inclusion, accessibility, and the intersections of gender, disability, race, etc. She has a passion with disability in community development.

Beyond the Straight and Narrow: Queer and Trans Television in the Age of Streaming

Katherine Sender

Cornell University, United States

Biography:

Katherine Sender is a professor of media and sexuality at Cornell University. She has produced, directed, and edited numerous acclaimed documentaries, including the Off the Straight and Narrow series about LGBTQ+ representations on US television (Media Education Foundation, 1998, 2006, 2023), Brand New You: Makeover Television and the American Dream (Media Education Foundation, 2014), and Threads: Sustaining India's Textile Tradition (Documentary Education Resources, 2022). She is the author of numerous books and articles, including Business not Politics: The Making of the Gay Market and The Makeover: Reality Television and Reflexive Audiences. She is returning to her focus on LGBTQ media and marketing in her current book project, Queer Media Mobilities.

“Lady” Lightkeepers: The Complicated Gender Politics of Resurrecting Women’s Lighthouse Histories

Shauna MacDonald

Cape Breton University, Canada

Abstract:

Women’s history is, mostly, forgotten history. Especially when it comes to stories of everyday women, there is very little evidence in our archives written by or even about women. As a gender and performance studies scholar presently focused on the cultural meaning and significance of lighthouses, I find myself continually inhabiting tensions between past and present, truth and fiction, and within and between various strands of feminist politics. When it comes to telling women’s history or examining public memory about, by, or even “for” women, there are far more questions than answers.

These questions are at the heart of much of my work as I attempt to understand and retell stories of women lighthouse keepers. Most people don’t even know that women—especially, but not only in the U.S.—served as lighthouse keepers throughout the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. While it is tempting to claim this fact as a signal of feminist progression or success in an unlikely time, such a read would be too simple. Women became lighthouse keepers for myriad reasons, but not as a conscious way of uplifting our gender. Their husbands or fathers fell ill or died, leaving them no choice. Or they petitioned the government for the job, or were even appointed after war left them widowed and responsible for raising children. In this presentation, I examine the complicated gender politics of lighthouse keeping in the past, and propose ways to live in the feminist tensions of the present.

Biography:

Shauna M. MacDonald, Associate Professor, is an international scholar with a PhD from Southern Illinois University, Carbondale (Speech Communication), and has worked at Villanova University (U.S.A.) as well as Cape Breton University (Canada). She is Associate Director of the Centre for Sound Communities at CBU, and incoming Editor-in-Chief of *Women & Language*, a feminist journal based in the U.S.A. She has published papers in peer-reviewed journals in North America, produced creative scholarship in several genres, and been featured in various media outlets for her expertise. Currently, she is finishing a book manuscript about the cultural meaning of lighthouses.

« I'm Kenough »: Masculinity Representations in Barbie the Movie

Emma Losier-Bédard,

Marielle Hajjar,

University of Quebec in Montreal, Canada

Abstract:

Since its release in July 2023, the movie Barbie generated billions in profit¹. The keen interest for Greta Gerwig's creation is undeniable². Some argue that the movie offers subversive representations of masculinity through one of the main characters, Ken³. Our study explores Barbie's representations of masculinity through a qualitative case study approach. To our knowledge, no study investigated this matter. The movie has been selected for its exemplarity and its potential of shaping masculinity. It has indeed been demonstrated on several occasions that Barbie's universe has an effect on individual and collective subjectivities^{4, 5, 6, 7, 8}. A reflexive thematic analysis has been conducted based on the hegemonic masculinity conception of Connell⁹. The analysis has been validated through an interjudge agreement. Results show that male characters have an inauthentic and egoistic presentation of themselves, competitive interactions between men and unequal relationships with women filled with mansplaining. Therefore, the film has multiple representations of traditional masculinity which is part of hegemonic masculinity. Masculinity's representations in the movie replicate indeed many Western stereotypes and gendered norms¹⁰. In sum, the film showed little subversion in its masculinities' expression. However, our analysis did not consider the movie's use of irony. Future research could furthermore investigate the public reception towards Barbie the movie to see if the satire has been well understood.

Key words: *Masculinities, hegemonic masculinity, Barbie, Ken, media representations, patriarchy.*

Biography:

Emma Losier-Bédard, graduate student, Department of Sexology, University of Quebec in Montreal. Research interests: gynecological and obstetric violence, disability



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