

6TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Sexuality & Social Work LJUBLJANA 2025



FSD

UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA
Faculty of Social Work



FSD

1955-2025

co-creating
social
change

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

1-4 July 2025



Sexuality &
Social Work

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

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WELCOME FROM THE CO-CHAIRS, SEXUALITY & SOCIAL WORK

WELCOME TO THE 6TH INTERNATIONAL SEXUALITY AND SOCIAL WORK CONFERENCE.

It is our great pleasure to welcome you to the 6th International Sexuality and Social Work Conference, hosted this year by the University of Ljubljana in the historic and vibrant capital of Slovenia.

The theme of this year's conference, *Resilience and Resistance: Reproductive Justice and Sexuality in Social Work*, reflects the urgency and importance of advancing equity, inclusion, and justice in social work practice, research, and education. Over the coming days, we will engage with critical issues and global perspectives that shape our understanding of sexuality, LGBTQ+ rights, reproductive justice, sexual health, sex work, and health and social care issues.

We are deeply grateful to our local hosts, **Professor Mojca Urek**, **Anže Jurček**, and **Dr Ana Marija Sobočan**, whose dedication, generosity, and hard work have been instrumental in making this conference a reality.

We would also like to express our sincere appreciation to the members of the scientific committee for their invaluable contributions in curating a diverse and thought-provoking programme.

We encourage you to take full advantage of the opportunities this conference provides, to engage in meaningful dialogue, build professional networks, and share knowledge that can inform and inspire practice across contexts.

Please share your experience with colleagues and peers by using the hashtag **#SWSexuality25** on social media, and most importantly, take time to connect, reflect, and enjoy all that this international gathering has to offer.

Warm regards

Alfonso Pezzella and **Dr Melissa Bird**

Sexuality and Social Work International Group Co-Chairs



WELCOME FROM THE HOSTS = UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA, FACULTY OF SOCIAL WORK

It is with great excitement and heartfelt solidarity that we welcome you to the 2025 Sexuality and Social Work Conference in Ljubljana. This gathering marks another vital moment in the ongoing and ever-deepening dialogue between sexuality, gender, and social work. Together, we create a space where radical inclusivity, critical scholarship, and activist practice meet, challenge, and transform each other.

We are especially proud to host this year's conference at the Faculty of Social Work, University of Ljubljana, as we celebrate 70 years of social work education in Slovenia. For seven decades, this faculty has stood at the intersection of knowledge, justice, and care—pushing boundaries, challenging institutions, and educating generations of practitioners committed to social change. This legacy is not just historical—it is alive in our classrooms, our movements, and this conference. And Slovenia's own history of reproductive justice activism, feminist organizing, queer resistance, and transnational solidarity offers both grounding and inspiration.

WELCOME TO A SPACE OF RESISTANCE, OF CONNECTION, AND OF RADICAL IMAGINING.

This year's *Sexuality and Social Work Conference* unfolds within a context of global upheaval and resistance. In the face of growing political backlash against gender and sexual diversity, reproductive autonomy, and trans rights, we gather not only to share research and practice but to reaffirm a collective commitment: to centre justice, to honour lived experiences, and to sustain communities that resist marginalisation.

From rising anti-trans legislation to the criminalisation of abortion, from state-sanctioned homophobia to the silencing of queer, disabled, and racialised voices—these are not isolated incidents but symptoms of broader structures of domination. In this context, gathering together is more than academic—it is political. It is necessary.

The conference brings together voices from across the world—activists, researchers, students, and practitioners—who refuse to accept the marginalisation of sexuality and gender in social work and whose work is rich in insight, deeply personal, and profoundly political. Across more than 100 presentations and discussions, we will explore struggles and strategies for survival, care, transformation, and justice. From exploring queer aging and polyparental families to questioning the role of fitspiration in LGBTQ+ mental health, the diversity of topics reflects the urgent need to expand the boundaries of both social work and sexuality studies. We pay particular attention to the ethical tensions and emancipatory potentials of working with people who are often ignored, pathologised, or tokenised within mainstream discourse—intersex people, trans and nonbinary youth, disabled queer persons, racialised migrants, and those living at the intersections of multiple oppressions. Special sessions allow for creative and embodied ways of thinking about queerness, memory, and resistance. We also take seriously the need to rethink how we teach and learn: many presentations engage with the pedagogical challenges of integrating LGBTQ+ and sexuality content into social work curricula and practice, especially in increasingly hostile or under-resourced educational environments.

Our program is unapologetically intersectional. Themes include reproductive justice, queer and decolonial care, violence and abolition, youth autonomy, anti-ableist practices, and reimagining education. We ask difficult questions: How do we confront ableism in reproductive policies? What does it mean to support trans people navigating hostile healthcare systems? How can we teach sexualities in classrooms policed by neoliberal and conservative agendas? What kinds of kinship, joy, and resistance emerge at the edges of normative family structures?

These conversations are not neutral. They demand that we look critically at our own fields, institutions, and professional practices. Social work itself has often been complicit in harm: in regulating bodies, imposing norms, and maintaining systems of control. This conference calls on us to rupture those

legacies—to build a social work that is accountable, community-rooted, and radically affirming of diverse ways of living, loving, and resisting.

We're especially proud to host multiple sessions led by activists and educators working on the frontlines of change. The Book of Abstracts you hold is more than a schedule—it is a document of struggle and vision, a record of thought forged in action, intimacy, and care. We invite you to read through this Book of Abstracts not simply as a program guide, but as a reflection of the intellectual, political, and emotional labour that defines our field. May it inspire you, challenge you, and remind you of the powerful solidarities we can build when we dare to speak openly about sex, desire, and justice in social work.

KEYNOTE HIGHLIGHTS

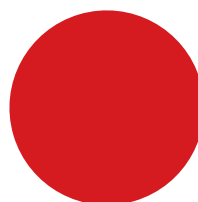
- Prof Dr Vesna Leskošek opens our conference with an urgent historical overview of the fight for abortion and reproductive rights in Slovenia—a foundation of our ongoing struggle and solidarity.
- Dr Carmen Yau shares deeply personal, pioneering work on interpersonal violence against disabled women in Asia, frontline sex volunteer movements, and narrative projects amplifying disabled survivors' voices.
- Prof Dr Judit Takács deconstructs how selective pronatalist policies—celebrating some families whilst excluding queer and non normative ones—uphold heteronormative and nationalistic agendas, challenging us to defend reproductive justice for all.

To those presenting, chairing, and listening: thank you. To those who arrived here carrying anger, grief, hope, and vision—this space is yours. Let this conference be a moment of connection and recharge, but also a launching point. Let it sharpen our tools. Let it deepen our resolve.

Because queerness is not just an identity—it is a demand for justice.

IN STRUGGLE AND SOLIDARITY,

*The hosts, Mojca Urek, Ana M. Sobočan & Anže Jurček, Faculty of Social Work, University of Ljubljana
Sexuality and Social Work Conference, Ljubljana, June 2025*



CONFERENCE ORGANISING COMMITTEE

Alfonso Pezzella

Dr. Melissa Bird

Dr. Mojca Urek

Dr. Ana M. Sobočan

Anže Jurček

With the help of: Oliver Bevc, Alekzander Ismaj Blatnik, Klara Mestek, Hana Turšič & Tea Vuga

CONFERENCE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

Prof Christine Cocker

Prof SJ Dodd

Prof Finn Meyer Cook

Dr Sulaimon Giwa

Prof Trish Hafford-Letchfield

Dr Ana Kralj

Dr Jose Antonio Langarita

Karl Mason

Prof Maria Nengeh Mensah

Dr Nick Mulé

Prof Annie Pullen Sansfaçon

Prof KJ Reed

Prof Jason Schaub

Prof K Scherrer

Dr Jama Shelton

Prof Paul Willis

Dr Jelka Zorn



»Join the conversation online.

Post using the conference hashtag [#SWSexuality25](#) and follow us on Twitter and Bluesky [@SWSexuality](#).

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

VENUE Faculty of Social Work, Topniška ulica 31, 1000 Ljubljana

WEDNESDAY, 2 JULY 2025

8:00 - 9:00	Registration <i>Main Foyer</i> All delegates presenting on Day 1 to upload presentations to the relevant lecture rooms				
9:00 - 9:45	WELCOMES AND INFO <i>Lecture room 2</i> Dr. Ana M. Sobočan Dr. Mojca Urek - Dean of Faculty of Social work, University of Ljubljana Alfonso Pezzella and Dr Melissa Bird – <i>Co-Chairs</i> , Sexuality & Social Work International Network Simon Maljevac , minister - Ministry of Solidarity-Based Future Suzana Tratnik , MA, writer and activist <i>Practical information – Anže Jurček</i>				
9:45 - 10:30	Keynote 1 - 167 <i>Lecture room 2</i> THE HISTORY OF THE FIGHT FOR ABORTION AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS IN SLOVENIA Vesna Leskošek (Slovenia) <i>Introduced and facilitated by Mojca Urek</i>				
10:30 - 11:00	Break <i>Lecture room 1</i>				
11:00 - 12:30	Parallel 1.1 - Reproductive Justice <i>Lecture room 3</i>	Parallel 1.2 - Violence, Crime & Paths to Justice <i>Lecture room 10</i>	Parallel 1.3 - Sexual Health & Wellbeing <i>Lecture room 11</i>	Parallel 1.4 - Youth & Identity: Forming Selves, Facing Systems <i>Lecture room 9</i>	Parallel 1.5 - LGBTQ+ Perspectives in Social Work Education: Teaching Beyond the Binary <i>Lecture room 12</i>
12:30 - 13:30	Lunch <i>Lecture room 1 & Main Foyer</i>				
13:30 - 14:15	Keynote 2 - 168 <i>Lecture room 2</i> FROM STIGMA TO STRENGTH: CHALLENGING TABOOS AND THE INTERSECTION OF DISABILITY AND SEXUAL EMPOWERMENT Carmen Yau (United Kingdom) <i>Introduced and facilitated by Alfonso Pezzella</i>				
14:15 - 15:00	Poster presentations and networking <i>Hallway at lecture rooms 7&8</i>				
15:00 - 16:30	Parallel 2.1 - Disability, Gender, & Sexuality <i>Lecture room 3</i>	Parallel 2.2 - Queering & Decolonizing Care <i>Lecture room 10</i>	Parallel 2.3 - Activism, Community & Resistance <i>Lecture room 11</i>	Parallel 2.4 - Teaching Intimacies: Sexuality, Identity & Intersectionality in Social Work <i>Lecture room 12</i>	Parallel 2.5 - Symposium <i>Lecture room 9</i>
18:00 - 19:30	Social program <i>Ljubljana's Town Hall – Glass atrium, Mestni trg 1 (city centre)</i> Reception and Exhibition <i>Kralji, kraljice in kvir tatice (Kings, Queens and Queer Thieves by Marijo Županov)</i> – guided presentation of the exhibition followed by a reception in the Town Hall				

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

- (29) Any reason is valid: How an unexpected abortion disclosure is met by an online community**
Aubrey Jones, Melody Huslage (United States)
- (42) Seahorse Dads: Reframing Transgender Pregnancy and Childbirth**
Gavin Fraser (United States)
- (46) What Is It Like to Have More Than Two Parents? A Narrative Review of the Experiences of Children Growing Up in Polyparental Families**
Sophie Parent, Roxane Guay, Kévin Lavoie (Canada)
- (47) 'I Was in the Belly of the Lady': A Narrative Review of Literature on the Experience of Children Conceived Through Surrogacy**
Roxane Guay, Sophie Parent, Kévin Lavoie (Canada)
- (54) Male social work students: common dispositions, motivations, experiences and barriers impacting their career choice**
David Galley (United Kingdom)
- (75) Effects of fitspiration content on body image and mental health among sexual minority individuals**
Randolph C. H. Chan (Hong Kong)
- (82) Fertility Preservation for Trans and Non-Binary Youth: a Review of the Literature**
Kevin Lavoie, Rebecca Angele, Thalie Pilon, Annie Pullen Sansfaçon, Nicholas Chadi, Lyne Chiniara, Isabel Côté (Canada)
- (107) The Mediating Role of Identity Centrality in the Relationship Between Black LGBTQ Community Belongingness and Subjective Well-being**
Keith J. Watts, Shawndaya Thrasher (United States)
- (116) Experiences of People with Intersex Variation(s) in Ireland**
Thelma Begley, Carmel Downes, Karin O'Sullivan, Jan DeVries, Louise Doyle, Brian Keogh, Mark Monaghan, Renee Molloy, Matt Kennedy, Agnes Higgins, (Ireland)
- (146) Transforming health and social care education and training: Creating culturally competent LGBT+ inclusive care**
Alfonso Pezzella (United Kingdom)
- (164) A lack of structure on LGBTQ+ affirmative themes in higher education programs for human service and healthcare professions in the Nordic countries**
Kris Clarke, Minna Laiti, Siri Lindqvist, Malin Lindroth, Åse Røthing, Inka Söderström, Heikki Tikkanen (Finland)
- (165) Gender Diversity Training through Expressive Arts Approach**
Diana K Kwok (China)

PARALLEL SESSION 1 = 11:00 = 12:30

PARALLEL 1.1 - REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

Session Location *Lecture room 3*

Chair: **Hana Turšič**

[67] **Origins and Fundamental Issues of the Reproductive Justice Movement**

Nesrine Bessaih (Canada)

[48] **Resigning Oneself to Resort Another Women to Have a Child: Parental Trajectories of Women Who Became Mothers Through Surrogacy or Egg Donation**

Roxane Guay, Kévin Lavoie, Isabel Côté (Canada)

[11] **Reproductive Justice Redefined: Challenging Ableism and Advocating for Disabled Parents' Rights**

Claire Azzopardi Lane (Malta)

[122] **Teaching Reproductive Justice Policy: Engaging Social Work Students Globally**

Kim McKay (United States)

[32] **Childfree Women's Resistance to Pronatalist Pressures and Stigma in Turkiye: A Case For Feminist Mental Health Care Practices**

Anil Ozge Ustunel (Türkiye)

PARALLEL 1.2 - VIOLENCE, CRIME & PATHS TO JUSTICE

Session Location *Lecture room 10*

Chair: **Ronnie Meechan**

[106] **Gender-based Violence Against Young Women in Bulgaria – Experiences, Strategies and Resources for Resistance**

Gergana Nenova, Radostina Antonova (Bulgaria)

[45] **The United State's Relationship with Placing Children on Sex Offender Registries: Documenting Iatrogenic Outcomes**

Rebecca Bosetti, Rebecca Fix (United States)

[148] **Queer Necropolitics and Reviewing LGBTQ+ Lives and Deaths in English Safeguarding Work**

Karl Mason, Adi Cooper, Kate Spreadbury (United Kingdom)

[87] **Supporting Victims of Anti-LGBTIQ+ Crimes: New Approaches to Restoration**

Jose Antonio Langarita, Núria Fustier-García, Núria Sadurní-Balcells, Pilar Albertín Carbó (Spain)

[128] **Image Based Sexual Abuse and the Impact this has on the health and wellbeing of LGBTQ individuals. Outcomes of an International PhD study**

Ronnie Meechan (United Kingdom)

PARALLEL 1.3 - SEXUAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

Session Location *Lecture room 11*

Chair: **Jason Schaub**

[44] **Reclaiming Sexual Well-being: Integrating Pleasure and Emotional Literacy in Social Work Interventions for Sexualized Substance Use Among gbMSM**

Maxime Blanchette, Mathieu Goyette, Jorge Flores-Aranda, Karine Bertrand (Canada)

[122] **Sources of Information for Sexuality and Sexual Health in LGBQ Adolescents**

Thelma Begley (Ireland)

[157] **The Impact of Sexual Identity Development on Young Adults' Sexual Well-Being**

Richard Brandon-Friedman, Trey V. Dellucci (United States)

[117] **Sexual Myths Among Adults Aged Between Twenty and Thirty-Five Years**

Maša Bunderla (Slovenia)

[144] **Changes in Partnership and Sexuality in Persons with Acquired Brain Injury**

Eva Ristič, Simona Tičar (Slovenia)

PARALLEL 1.4 - YOUTH & IDENTITY: FORMING SELVES, FACING SYSTEMS

Session Location *Lecture room 9*

Chair: **Maria Nengeh Mensah**

[37] **"I know who I am": Draw-and-Tell Conversations with Gender Creative Children**

Eline Lenne, Martha Driessnack, Susanne Klawetter, Ben Anderson-Nathe (United States)

[49] **Facilitators and Barriers to Queer and Trans Youth Development: Addressing Accessibility and "Isms," Building Collaborations, and Supporting Mental Health in Community-Based Organizations**

M. Candace Christensen, Jay Jeon, Riley Hostetter, Megan Doyle, Jax Kynn (United States)

[76] **Negotiating Space: How Young People Understand Non-Consensual and Unwanted Sexual Encounters**

Jessica Mencia, Ciann Wilson (United States)

[56] **Minority Ethnic Queer Youth: Navigating Double Marginalization and Mental Health Challenges**

Sofie Aggerbo Johansen (Denmark)

[159] **(De)trans Discourses: Crossing Media, Professionals and Detrans Youth Narratives on Detransition.**

Noémie Lambert, Annie Pullen Sansfaçon, Melanie Millette, Olivier Turbide, Morgane A. Gelly, Edith Paré-Roy (Canada)

PARALLEL 1.5 - LGBTQ+ PERSPECTIVES IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION: TEACHING BEYOND THE BINARY

Session Location *Lecture room 12*

Chair: **Mojca Urek**

[153] **Queer Temporality & Academic Social Work in the United States: Applications within Teaching, Scholarship, and Service**

Kathryn Berringer, Jennifer Ananda, Zhiqi Yi, Briana McGeough, Michael Riquino, Sarah Jen (United States)

[152] **LGBTQ+ in Social Work Education: Between Activism, Practice and Theory**

Mojca Urek, Jelka Zorn (Slovenia)

[34] **From Abortions to Ze/Zir: Teaching Sexuality Content in a Social Work Program**

Shanna K. Kattari (United States)

[134] **Supporting Trans and Nonbinary Students in Practicum Education**

Jamie Borgan, Jama Shelton, SJ Dodd, Gabriel San Emeterio (United States)

[136] **Searching for Meaning: Transgender and Non-Binary Experiences of Physical Education**

Helen Keane (United Kingdom)

PARALLEL SESSION 2 = 15:00 = 16:30

PARALLEL 2.1 - DISABILITY, GENDER, & SEXUALITY

Session Location *Lecture room 3*

Chair: **David Abbott**

[129] **Disabled people negotiate gender, sexual identity and self-directed social care support in England: how does choice and control operate?**

David Abbott, Edmund Coleman-Fountain, Harvey Humphrey (United Kingdom)

[18] **Silent Struggles: The Intersection of Disability and LGBTQ+ Identity in Conservative Cultural Settings**

Claire Azzopardi Lane, Matthew Vassallo, Andrew Azzopardi (Malta)

[53] **»You Are Slow and Unattractive«: Some Aspects of Sexuality of Persons with Disabilities in Croatia**

Marko Buljevac (Croatia)

[113] **Exploring Good Support for Trans and/or Gender Non-conforming People with a Learning Disability**

Lorne Power (United Kingdom)

[139] **Protocol for a Systematic Review on the Social Participation of People with Disabilities who Identify as LGBTQIA+**

Alexander Moreno, Penelope Pelletier, Ashleigh Yule, AndreAs Neumann-Mascis, Marc-Olivier Croteau, Patrick O'Connor, Alan Martino (Canada)

PARALLEL 2.2 - QUEERING & DECOLONIZING CARE

Session Location *Lecture room 10*

Chair: **Diana K Kwok**

[74] **Queer Caring – Irish Family Carers and Their Service Experiences**

Zoe Hughes (Ireland)

[59] **Intersectional Care and Belonging: Navigating Structural Inequalities and Relational Resilience among Rainbow Migrants**

Lukasz Krzyzowski (Australia)

[60] **Kotawêw Project: Exploring the Role of Doulas in HIV Care for Indigenous Women and Two-Spirit People in Canada**

Rusty Souleymanov, Melissa Morris (Canada)

[8] **Embracing Difference, Queering Care: Supporting Autistic People's Intimate Lives Beyond Neuronormative and Heteronormative Boundaries**

Monique Huysamen (United Kingdom)

[130] **Resisting Weaponized Tears and Institutional Homophobia: Lessons from the Frontline**

Ranjith Kulatilake (Canada)

PARALLEL 2.3 - ACTIVISM, COMMUNITY & RESISTANCE

Session Location *Lecture room 11*

Chair: **Nick Mulé**

[28] **Formation, Operation, and Maintenance of a Queer Community Advisory Board**

Aubrey Jones, Rachel Farr, Olivia Swedberg-Yinger, Keisa Fallin Bennett (United States)

[89] **Queer Community under Attack: Queer Liberation Theory as a Blueprint for Activism and Resistance**

Cameron McKenzie, Abbi Longmire, Nick Mulé (Canada)

[38] **Social Work Abolitionist & Anarchist Imaginaries: Effecting Change for the Gender & Sexually Diverse**

Nick Mulé (Canada)

[39] **Searching for social work in queer activism and the tackle of social death: the case of Greece**

Panagiotis Pentaris (United Kingdom)

[79] **Migration as a Gender and Sexual Revolution: Arabic-Speaking Queer Community Arts in the EU Diaspora**

Samar Zughool (Slovenia)

PARALLEL 2.4 - TEACHING INTIMACIES:
SEXUALITY, IDENTITY & INTERSECTIONALITY IN
SOCIAL WORK

Session Location *Lecture room 12*

Chair: **Mojca Urek**

[91] **“Talking about race is hard and yet you do it... same with sex”: Strategies for Teaching Sex, Sexualities, and Sexual Health Content in Social Work**

Jared Israel Best, Christine Marie Velez (United States)

[31] **Comprehensive & Positive Sex Education: A Social Work Essential in Violence Prevention**

Rebecca Bosetti, Jamie Yoder, Adam Brown, Melissa Grady (United States)

[70] **Sexual Education for Youth in Precarious Situations: Insights and Implications for Group Work in Juvenile Justice**

Thomas Wilke (Germany)

[88] **Has he been to the Vagina Museum? Unexpected impacts of involvement in research and education**

Sally Lee (United Kingdom)

[149] **Intersectionality in Intimacy - Age, Class & Ability**

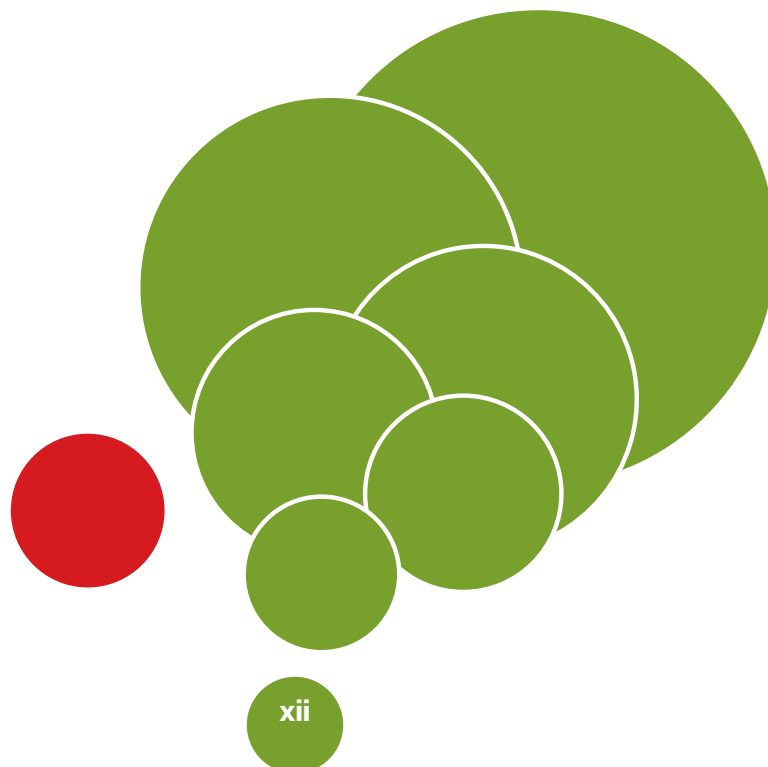
Priscilla Allen (United States)

PARALLEL 2.5 - SYMPOSIUM

Session Location *Lecture room 9*

[102] **Ageing Queerly: Living Archives of Resistance, Struggle and Joy**

Ana-Cristina Santos, Irene Massa, Joana Brilhante, Pako Chalkidis, Anže Jurček (Portugal)



THURSDAY, 3 JULY 2025

9:15 - 10:00	Keynote 3 - 166 <i>Lecture room 2</i>				
	REPRODUCTIVE EMPOWERMENT FOR ALL? POLITICAL DEMOGRAPHY AND PARENTING RIGHTS IN EUROPE				
	Judit Takács (Hungary)				
	<i>Introduced and facilitated by Ana M. Sobočan</i>				
10:00 - 10:30	Break <i>Lecture room 1 & Main Foyer</i>				
10:30 - 12:00	Parallel 3.1 - Queer Families, Relationships & Caregiving <i>Lecture room 3</i>	Parallel 3.2 - Social Work Perspectives on Trans & Gender Diversity <i>Lecture room 11</i>	Parallel 3.3 - Queer Ageing & Inclusive Care <i>Lecture room 12</i>	Parallel 3.4 - Migration & Refugees <i>Lecture room 9</i>	Parallel 3.5 - Workshop <i>Lecture room 10</i>
12:00 - 12:45	Lunch <i>Lecture room 1 & Main Foyer</i>				
12:45 - 14:15	Parallel 4.1 - Minority Stress, Resilience & Trauma-Informed Approaches <i>Lecture room 9</i>	Parallel 4.2 - Systemic Harm and Affirming Care <i>Lecture room 10</i>	Parallel 4.3 - Evolving Practices in Social Work: Challenging Norms, Claiming Space <i>Lecture room 11</i>	Parallel 4.4 - Seeking Justice & Representation: Access, Rights, Resistance <i>Lecture room 12</i>	
14:15 - 14:30	Break <i>Lecture room 1 & Main Foyer</i>				
14:30 - 16:00	Parallel 5.1 - Mental Health and Inclusive Care <i>Lecture room 10</i>	Parallel 5.2 - Youth, Development and Prevention <i>Lecture room 11</i>	Parallel 5.3 - Arts-Based, Narrative & Reflective Methods in Sexuality Research <i>Lecture room 12</i>	Parallel 5.4 - Self-Compassion & Resilience In LGBTQ+ Research and Practice <i>Lecture room 9</i>	
16:05 - 16:30	Closing and Scientific Poster Competition Prize Announcement <i>Lecture room 2</i> Alfonso Pezzella, Mojca Urek, Ana M. Sobočan & Anže Jurček				



Sexuality & Social Work
SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

PARALLEL SESSION 3 = 10.30 = 12:00

PARALLEL 3.1 - QUEER FAMILIES, RELATIONSHIPS & CAREGIVING **Session Location** Lecture room 3

Chair: **Fiachra O Suilleabhain**

[85] **Resistance and Reform: The Role of Anti-Gender Mobilization in Slovenia's Path to Marriage Equality**
Roman Kuhar (Slovenia)

[110] **Queering Families and Reproductive Rights in Ireland: Systemic, Historic and Current Othering**
Fiachra O Suilleabhain, Danielle Mackle, Declan Coogan (Ireland)

[155] **Does it takes a Mother to Make a Family?: The Experiences of Children of Gay Fathers Born Through Surrogacy**
Marie-Christine Williams-Plouffe, Isabel Côté, Kévin Lavoie (Canada)

[83] **How Babies Are Made? Children's Books About Family Diversity and Conception by Sperm Donation**
Kevin Lavoie, Marie-Alexia Allard, Audrey Simard, Isabel Côté, Raphaële Noël (Canada)

PARALLEL 3.2 - SOCIAL WORK PERSPECTIVES ON TRANS & GENDER DIVERSITY **Session Location** Lecture room 11

Chair: **Maria Nengeh Mensah**

[78] **Social Work Practice with Transgender and Gender Diverse Adults: A Scoping Review**
Coral Leather, Stephen Hicks, Dharman Jeyasingham (United Kingdom)

[103] **Social Worker Views on the Rights and Acceptance of Transgender and Non-binary Individuals in Aotearoa New Zealand**
Georgina Guild, Laura Chubb (New Zealand)

[121] **A Qualitative Exploration of Social Support Experiences of Trans Women/Transfeminine Adults Accessing Estrogen-based Gender-affirming Hormone Therapy in Canada**
Hadas Kluger, Ashley Lacombe-Duncan, Angela Underhill, Harshita Iyer, Gabi Celia Ortiz, Asya Gunduz, Rsha Soud, Mona Loutfy (United States)

[124] **Community Social Work and Mutual Aid in the Ballroom Scene: Experiences of Young Queer and Trans People of Colour in the Nordics**
Jamie Lee (Finland)

PARALLEL 3.3 - QUEER AGEING & INCLUSIVE CARE **Session Location** Lecture room 12

Chair: **Karl Mason**

[160] **The Social Geography of Fear and Acceptance: Older Adults' Perspectives on LGBTQ in Residential Aged Care**
Klara Le (Sweden)

[77] **Co-creating Rainbow-Inclusive Aged Care: Participatory Research with Older LGBTQ+ People and Residential Aged Care Providers in Australia**
Mark Hughes, Meaghan Vosz, Andrea Waling, Limin Mao, Kristiana Ludlow, Lukasz Krzyzowski, Craig Sinclair, Ruth Hubbard, Benignus Logan (Australia)

[61] **A Steep Learning Curve: Evaluation of Palliative Care eLearning Co-designed with LGBTIQ+ People in Australia**
Meaghan Vosz (she/her), Mark Hughes, Colleen Cartwright (Australia)

[86] **Hidden in Plain Sight: The Impact of Rainbow-Blind Social Work on Ageing LGBTQ+ Adults**
Dora Jandric, Jason Schaub, Paul Willis, Stephen Hicks, Ben Thomas (United Kingdom)

[111] **Loneliness, Social Isolation & Interventions Among Older LGBTQ+ People: A Scoping Review**
Willem Stander, Dora Jandrić, Jason Schaub (United Kingdom)

PARALLEL 3.4 - MIGRATION & REFUGEES

Session Location *Lecture room 9*

Chair: **Inka M Söderström**

[150] **Upholding the values and principles of social work in a hostile environment: focusing on the experience of LGBTQI+ forced migrants and the UK policies and practices that shape their lives.**
Dawn River (United Kingdom)

[41] **Heteronormativity as a Barrier to Social Service Accessibility for People with Refugee Background**
Inka Söderström (Finland)

[26] **Queer Lens in Focus: A Photovoice Project with LGBTQ+ Refugees living in Athens, Greece**
Moshoula Capous-Desyllas (United States)

[140] **“Stride Forward on Eggshells” : Chinese Gay Men’s Experience of Navigating Their Lives in New Zealand**
Jerry Lo (New Zealand)

PARALLEL 3.5 - WORKSHOP

Session Location *Lecture room 10*

[143] **Sexuality and Social Work: A Collaborative, Dialogical, and Constructivist Approach**
Lea Šugman Bohinc (Slovenia)



PARALLEL SESSION 4 = 12:45 = 14:15

PARALLEL 4.1 - MINORITY STRESS, RESILIENCE & TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACHES

Session Location Lecture room 9

Chair: **Melissa Grady**

[57] **Navigating Healthcare as 2SLGBTQIA+ Individuals in Estrie: Stress, Resilience, and the Need for Inclusive Practices**

Sophie Parent, Julie-Christine Cotton (Canada)

[158] **Using Minority Stress Theory to Understand Progression Toward Self-Acceptance Among Gay Men Raised within the Pentecostal Church**

Richard Brandon-Friedman, Tayon Swafford, Anthony Ungaro (United States)

[126] **Somatic Mastery of Sexual Trauma**

Andrew Pari (United States)

[35] **Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Problematic Sexual Behavior Among Adolescents: An Integrated Approach**

Jamie Yoder, Melissa Grady (United States)

PARALLEL 4.2 - SYSTEMIC HARM AND AFFIRMING CARE

Session Location Lecture room 10

Chair: **Dora Jandrić**

[69] **Insurance Barriers to Gender-Affirming Health Care**

Hazel Zaman, Anissa Rogers (United States)

[133] **Experiences Of Non-Binary People Regarding Medical Transition In Slovenia**

Alekzander Ismaj Blatnik, Oliver Bevc (Slovenia)

[71] **Transgender and Gender Diverse Persons' Sexual Health: Training Gaps and Desires Among Primary Care Providers Through a Lens of Gender Affirmation and Health Equity**

Ashley Lacombe-Duncan, Seema Mehta, Shanna K. Kattari, Rory O'Brien, Hadas Kluger, Julie Blaszcak (United States)

[108] **The husband stitch and the infrastructure of patriarchal medical violence**

Teja Kosi (Slovenia)



PARALLEL 4.3 - EVOLVING PRACTICES IN SOCIAL WORK: CHALLENGING NORMS, CLAIMING SPACE

Session Location Lecture room 11

Chair: **Tea Vuga**

[163] **It's Our Nature to Love: The Lives of Polyamorous People in a Mononormative Society**

Tea Vuga (Slovenia)

[132] **Supporting Non-Coercive and Non-Discriminatory Practices in Social Work Toward Sex Workers: A Matter of Justice!**

Julie Deslandes Leduc, Maria Nengeh Mensah (Canada)

[92] **Emotionality and Embodiment in Macro Social Work with Sex Workers**

Anke van den Dries (Netherlands)

[95] **LGBTIQ+ and Homelessness in Germany - Queer Perspectives, Experiences and Needs**

Prof. Dr. Claudia Steckelberg (Germany)

[105] **How are sexual identities and sexuality of prisoners constructed in Swiss prisons?**

Daniele Bigoni (Switzerland)

PARALLEL 4.4 - SEEKING JUSTICE & REPRESENTATION: ACCESS, RIGHTS, RESISTANCE

Session Location Lecture room 9

Chair: **Ana M. Sobočan**

[66] **Exploring Emancipatory Language Practices for Reproductive Justice**

Nesrine Bessaih (Canada)

[104] **Exploring Gender Diversity in Finnish Social Work: Advancing Justice and Rights**

Emilia Brusila (Finland)

[21] **Pride4All: Accessibility, Representation, and Radical Welcoming for the (Dis)abled in the Pride Movement**

Carmen Yau (United Kingdom)

[7] **A Critical Analysis of How Local Autism Strategies Represent Autistic Adults' Intimate Lives**

Monique Huysamen, Bethany Jay (United Kingdom)

[99] **If not now, then when? Social work educators, cis-supremacist legislation, and the question of professional obligation**

Jama Shelton, SJ Dodd, Jamie Borgan (United States)



PARALLEL SESSION 5 = 14:30 = 16:00

PARALLEL 5.1 - MENTAL HEALTH AND INCLUSIVE CARE **Session Location** Lecture room 10

Chair: **Jason Schaub**

[25] **Understanding Menstruation Outcomes Using Objectification Theory**

Melissa Ertl, Joy Hassan (United States)

[97] **Sexuality of Residents of Montreal's Mental Health Residential Resources**

Cynthia Côté (Canada)

[6] **State run mental health institutions in India post-IPC 377 verdict: Examining queer-phobic space-attitude-administrative complex**

Sudarshan R Kottai (India)

[40] **Prevalence and Mental Health Impact of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Change Efforts among LGBTQ+ Individuals in Hong Kong**

Randolph C. H. Chan (Hong Kong)

PARALLEL 5.2 - YOUTH, DEVELOPMENT AND PREVENTION **Session Location** Lecture room 11

Chair: **Jose Antonio Langarita**

[36] **What contributes to youth sexual offending?**

Melissa Grady, Jamie Yoder (United States)

[55] **Navigating Normativity – Youth and Social Street Workers Support of Development of Sexuality**

Mai Groenevelt (Netherlands)

[84] **'They Gave Birth to Us and Tell Us What Is Right and Wrong': Intersectional Influences on Ghanaian Adolescents' Sexual Health Attitudes**

Laura Ann Chubb (New Zealand)

[30] **Needs and Expectations of Emerging Adults from Sexual Violence Prevention Programs in Turkiye**

Anil Ozge Ustunel, Alev Cavdar (Türkiye)

[98] **Prevention of violence against boys – Queer and Intersectional perspectives**

Mart Busche, Jutta Hartmann (Germany)

PARALLEL 5.3 - ARTS-BASED, NARRATIVE & REFLECTIVE METHODS IN SEXUALITY RESEARCH **Session Location** Lecture room 12

Chair: **Yannick Gaudette**

[5] **Collective Autoethnography of Gender Transition: A Decade of Stories Through Image and Narrative**

Gaben Sanchez, Jaehee Yi (Canada)

[58] **Writing Your Own Story**

Siri Lindqvist (Sweden)

[43] **PnP/chemsex: A Spectrum of Emotions - A Photovoice Research Project**

Yannick Gaudette, Jorge Flores-Aranda, Maria Nengeh Mensah (Canada)

[90] **Researcher's reflexive positioning in Chemsex Research: How Self-Disclosure Shapes the Study of Sexuality in Social Work**

Julie Deslandes Leduc, Gui Tardif, Flores-Aranda Jorje (Canada)

PARALLEL 5.4 - SELF-COMPASSION & RESILIENCE
IN LGBTQ+ RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Session Location Lecture room 9

Chair: **Sulaimon Giwa**

[135] **Resilience, Resistance, and Inclusive Integration of LGBTQ+ Newcomers in Newfoundland and Labrador: Challenges and Pathways to Support**

Sulaimon Giwa (Canada)

[68] **LGBTQTeeHee: Feasibility and Acceptability of a Stand-up Comedy-based Intervention for Mental Well-being and Resilience of LGBTQ+ Individuals**

Anthony Gifford, Robert Beck (United Kingdom)

[22] **Mirrored Paths to Self-Acceptance: The Interwoven Processes of Self-Compassion and Queer Identity Development.**

Doug Crews (United States)

[23] **Exploring LGB Persons' Experience of Self-Compassion in Their Coming Out Narratives**

Doug Crews (United States)

[24] **Blossoming from the Mud: Comic Art as a Means for Transformative Compassion in LGBTQ+ Activism**

Phillip Joy (Canada)



Sexuality &
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SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

PROF. DR. VESNA LESKOŠEK

Professor at the Faculty of Social Work, University of Ljubljana and member of a research group at the Faculty of Social Sciences.



THE HISTORY OF THE FIGHT FOR ABORTION AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS IN SLOVENIA

Abstract

The historical analysis of the struggle for the right to abortion shows both the complexity and importance of reproductive rights and the consequences of denying them. The Slovenian case is interesting because the movement for the right to abortion took place quite early. It also shows how the right to abortion affects the entire life course of women. It affects family relationships, the opportunities they have for education and paid work, what they can do, the way they pursue their interests, ambitions and aspirations, and the autonomy they have in all these areas.

The historical overview of the abortion struggle in Slovenia has shown that it contributed not only to the legalisation of abortion, but also to the development of broader reproductive rights. It also contributed to the development of policy of de-familiarisation, as the state partially took over care responsibilities while creating conditions for family planning and inclusive parenthood. In this context, abortion is only a small part of a complex and inherently multisectoral field that involves social protection, the fight against poverty, labour market regulation, social policy, housing policy, the establishment of kindergartens, sex education in schools, etc., in addition to health care. This positive approach of providing people with the conditions for a dignified life and the state sharing the care responsibility with the family, as well as the liberalisation of abortion, also led to a gradual decrease in the abortion rate, particularly after 1974, when the new federal constitution was adopted, in which the right to abortion became unconditional up to the tenth week of pregnancy.

An important result of the historical analysis is the realisation that the liberalisation of the right to abortion leads to fewer abortions because it is structurally contextualised. This involves the efforts to create conditions in which women choose to have children, which is only possible if they can rely on the state to protect their autonomy and share responsibility for care.

Biography

Vesna earned her PhD in 2001 with a dissertation titled *The first-wave feminism in Slovenia from 1890 to 1940*. She decided to do a research on women's movement because, as a feminist activist herself, she was looking for information about women's struggles in the past, which she could not find in the official Slovenian history because women were largely erased from it. Despite all the efforts to revive the memory of women's historical contribution to the country's development, she argues that this is basically a never-ending struggle.

The issue of abortion and reproductive rights is one that has been silenced and has to be brought to light as these rights are threatened and attacked by the extremist and populist right in today's Europe. On this topic, Vesna and her co-authors have published a monograph titled *Abortion and Reproductive Rights in Slovenia: A Case of Resistance* (Routledge, 2024). She has also worked extensively on the issues of violence against women and children and more recently on old-age poverty, which is predominantly female in Slovenia.

In 2022, she was awarded the Golden Plaque by the University of Ljubljana for her academic contribution to the development of the institution.



DR. CARMEN YAU

Lecturer in Social Work & Lead of Well-Being Research Unit,
Goldsmiths, University of London



FROM STIGMA TO STRENGTH: CHALLENGING TABOOS AND THE INTERSECTION OF DISABILITY AND SEXUAL EMPOWERMENT

Abstract

As a disability activist, Anne Finger, stated, “sexuality is often the source of our deepest oppression; it is also often the source of our deepest pain”. Disabled women face a long history of intersectional oppression as their lived experience is more than “double disadvantaged” due to their disability, gender and other protected characteristics. The terms “ableism” and “disablism” are interchangeable to denote a series of assumptions and social practices that marginalise disabled people due to their disability status. Disablism implies a normative attitude of negative values, unequal practices, and rigid social orders to maltreat disabled people. Sexuality assistance for disabled individuals, the old, stigma-oriented attitude exists parallelly with the new positive views, even in the social care context (Benoit et al., 2023)sexual exclusion, and social justice, including equal rights for people living with disabilities (PLWD). The sexuality of disabled people is theoretically framed in medicalised, apolitical, and individualist terms. Thus, sexual invisibility in disability movements leads to poor sexual education, medical neglect, low self-esteem and poor body image, relationship difficulties, unconsented sex and abuse. For this reason, oppression resistance is a continuing interest among disabled women.

In this call to action, Dr Yau will share her path from an active disabled advocate to a social work academic focusing on disability and sexuality. She will share her practice wisdom in empowering disabled individuals in needs assessment, risks assessment, care planning and reviewing. Dr Yau will cover her early work on interpersonal violence against disabled women, sex volunteer services and movement in Asia, and her narrative project on sexuality and eroticism of disability, as well as her recent work on the subjectivity and agency of disabled women in the kink and fetish world. She will introduce the intersectional model of disability to revisit a series of issues related to (dis)ability and body, gender and sexuality, kink and relationships. The intersectional model helps us to unpack capitalist ideals, such as heteronormative able-bodiedness, in social work education, practice and research. The presentation ends with recommendations and joint action to build cultural humility in the social work community to validate and respond to the experience and needs of those with marginalised and stigmatised identities.

Biography

Dr Carmen Yau is a Lecturer in Social Work and Lead of Well-being Research Unit at the Goldsmiths, University of London. In 2023, She completed her PhD on constructing self-identity and sexuality of women with disability via social media. She received her Master of Social Work from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (2017), a Professional Diploma in Health Counselling from Hong Kong Baptist University (2013), Bachelor of Social Sciences (Psychology) from The Chinese University of Hong Kong (2005).

Carmen is a multi-award-winning advocate in the community of the disabled. She won the Disability Power 100 award in 2024. In 2021, she was nominated for the UN Women's Rise and Raise Other Award as an acknowledgement of achievements that she has made supporting and inspiring women and girls around the world. In 2020, She was the third-place winner in Tatler's Hot List of "Sixteen Women Fighting for Fairness in Asia". Her ambition is to advocate disability and gender mainstreaming. Over the years she developed a strong partnership with shareholders from disability and women communities at the local and regional levels.

Carmen devotes her passion and time to addressing the intersectionality of disabled women. Her research relates to health inequality and management, gender and sexuality, independent living, technology and social media, and social work education and research. Carmen's erotica "Sugar XXX's Stories" is an impactful narrative practice to gain the representation of sexuality and disability. She had a TEDx talk to share the rationale and impact of her project. Her story and research are regularly featured in media, documentaries and movies. With her lived experiences and her expertise, Carmen is a global disability expert who pursues radical changes for all.

Dr. Carmen Yau's participation in the conference was made possible with the support of Goldsmiths, University of London.

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON



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PROF. DR. JUDIT TAKÁCS

Research Professor at the Centre for Social Sciences,
Centre of Excellence of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences



REPRODUCTIVE EMPOWERMENT FOR ALL? POLITICAL DEMOGRAPHY AND PARENTING RIGHTS IN EUROPE

Abstract

Many European countries encourage their citizens to have “planned children”, some by introducing targeted policies to lower the childcare burden (especially for mothers). Others focus on experimenting with financial incentives, including various forms of baby bonuses. The historical example of the Cross of Honour of the German Mother can also be mentioned, symbolizing an extreme form of selective pronatalism, which was awarded to selected “*kinderreich* families” for having at least four children in Nazi Germany. A similar form of symbolic appreciation is the Order of Parental Glory, awarded to parents raising seven or more children in Russia.

In this talk I will examine the parenting rights of same-sex couples and the surrounding social expectations, as reflected by the relevant legal frameworks, and as measured by large-scale cross-national longitudinal surveys. I will interpret the results from a European political demographic perspective, by introducing the concept of selective patriotic pronatalism, defined as a preference for the reproduction of certain social groups over others in a social context where reproduction is perceived as a national or patriotic duty. The findings highlight a paradoxical feature of present-day European right-wing sexual politics, i.e. in typically far-right political agendas LGBTIQ people can be blamed for negative demographic outcomes, and, at the same time, subjected to heteronormatively prescribed childlessness, resulting from normative expectations about limiting non-heteronormative reproduction as much as possible.

Biography

Judit Takács is a Research Professor at the Centre for Social Sciences – Centre of Excellence of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Her main research interests cover family practices, childlessness, caring masculinities, the social history of homosexuality, homophobia and genderphobia; while also having extensive research experience in HIV/AIDS prevention, community engagement in the context of public health preparedness, and measuring social attitudes. She has studied in Budapest (ELTE) and Amsterdam (UvA), holds a Ph.D. in sociology, a Diploma Habilitationis, and the Doctor of Science title (awarded by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences). Her recent publications include a co-edited volume on [Paradoxical Right-Wing Sexual Politics in Europe](#), thematic issues on [Gender Studies in Exile](#) and [Fragile Pronatalism](#); a book chapter on [How to Conserve Kertbeny's Grave? A Case of Post-Communist Queer Necrophilia](#), and a co-authored article on [Resisting Genderphobia in Hungary](#)



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Oral and Poster Presentations

(5) Collective Autoethnography of Gender Transition: A Decade of Stories Through Image and Narrative

Gaben Sanchez¹, Jaehee Yi¹

¹*University Of Victoria, Victoria, Canada*

Aim & Objectives:

This study employs visual images and narrative storytelling to explore the lived experiences of a married couple over ten years as one partner undergoes gender transition. The objective is to document and analyze the evolving identities, relational dynamics, and shared emotional landscapes as both partners transition together in different ways. This research aims to enhance understanding of how personal and relational identities are constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed during the gender transition process.

Methods:

A collective autoethnographic approach is used, where both partners engage in reflective narrative and visual storytelling. Through photographs, artwork, and written narratives, the study captures their journey, challenges, and growth. This method provides an intimate and nuanced exploration of gender, identity, and relationship dynamics, offering a rich, multimodal representation of their shared experiences.

Findings/Outcomes:

The study presents visual and narrative stories highlighting significant moments in the couple's journey. Themes of resilience, transformation, and identity fluidity emerge. Visual elements, such as photographs and symbolic artwork, express complex emotions beyond verbal language. Narratives provide insight into how gender transition affects both the individual and their intimate relationships.

Discussion/Conclusion:

This research demonstrates the power of visual and narrative storytelling in documenting the complexities of gender transition. It emphasizes the importance of acknowledging diverse experiences within trans and non-binary communities, particularly in intimate relationships. The study highlights the therapeutic potential of visual and narrative methods for exploring and affirming evolving identities.

Implications for Practice:

Findings suggest significant implications for social work and therapeutic practice, advocating for a more inclusive approach to supporting trans and non-binary individuals and their families. Practitioners are encouraged to integrate visual and narrative methods into their work, offering alternative ways for clients to express and process their experiences, fostering deeper understanding and connection.

(6) State run mental health institutions in India post-IPC 377 verdict: Examining queer-phobic space-attitude-administrative complex

Sudarshan R Kottai¹

¹*Indian Institute of Technology Palakkad, Palakkad, India*

Introduction:

Even though the Supreme court in 2018 judgement that decriminalised same-sex relationships instructed both central and state governments to disseminate its judgement widely to offer legal calm to LGBTQIA+ individuals, there has been no such attempt by the governments till date. None of the mental health institutions including the three mental health academic institutions under the Government of India have initiated LGBTQIA+ rights-based awareness campaigns till date when lack of awareness about sexualities in itself remains a critical factor for non-inclusive environment that forces queer individuals to even end their lives.

Aims and objectives:

My talk would examine the space-attitude-administrative complex at state run mental health institutions with respect to its responses to decriminalization of queer sexualities in 2018.

Method:

I examine the public interfaces of mental health institutions (websites, programmes conducted on LGBTQIA+ issue) and recent developments to investigate the relationship of mental health institutions with its marginalized publics.

Findings:

Mental health institutions simply follow the state's majoritarian ethos acting as political agents of the state as mental health awareness gets restricted to individual disorders, symptoms and epidemiological surveys.

Discussions and conclusions:

The dominance of biomedical models that focuses on individual level of analysis at the cost of societal and political analyses compounds its troubled relationship with LGBTQIA+ people. The failure to even comply with the constitutional court's order to create awareness on a very sensitive judgement that has the potential to improve well-being of the Indian queer community as a whole stands testimony to the highly medicalizing tendency and queer phobic space-attitude-administrative complex prevalent at these institutions posing ethical questions.

Implications for practice:

Social work as a discipline needs to act as a vital counter-discourse to the biomedical hegemony prevalent at Indian mental health systems to enable rights based discourse on LGBTQIA+ issues.

(7) A Critical Analysis of How Local Autism Strategies Represent Autistic Adults' Intimate Lives

Monique Huysamen¹, Bethany Jay

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Background:

Intimate relationships are an important, yet ordinary, part of many people's lives. However, autistic people experience greater challenges around sex and intimate relationships and more loneliness and isolation. As diagnostic rates for autism in the UK increase, international research shows that support around sexuality and gender diversity is imperative to promote autistic people's well-being. Health and social care policies should guide social care systems to address the inequalities. However, our recent policy analysis shows that national health and social care policies in England tend to overlook support for intimate relationships. Building upon this research, this study investigates if and how local autism strategies in England recognise and prioritise support for sex and relationships.

Methods:

This empirical study employs a novel five-step process for critical policy analysis designed to identify and evidence both presences and absences within documents. We systematically identified all publicly available local autism strategies in England (89 documents). We combined keyword searches and hybrid thematic analysis (both deductive and inductive) to scrutinise the policy content. To evidence absences in the representation of intimate lives within these documents, we supplemented this with content analysis, using code quantification to support final themes.

Findings and discussion:

The findings evidence a clear lack of positive and proportionate representations of intimate lives across local strategies. No strategy contained a priority area focused on supporting intimate relationships, and most strategies did not consider people's intimate lives within relevant priority areas like transition to adulthood and housing, or in relation to support for LGBTQ+ autistic people. The study highlights the importance of advocating for the recognition of autistic people's intimate lives in national autism policy.

Conclusion:

We present six recommendations for integrating recognition and support for sex and relationships into future autism strategies and policymaking processes, with clear significance to international autism policy contexts.

(8) Embracing Difference, Queering Care: Supporting Autistic People's Intimate Lives Beyond Neuronormative and Heteronormative Boundaries

Monique Huysamen¹

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Background:

Autistic people experience greater challenges around sex and relationships in our neuronormative and heteronormative society, which is seldom responsive and often hostile to autistic people's needs.

This paper presents findings from SAAIL: Supporting Autistic Adults' Intimate Lives, a research study exploring how autistic people feel adult social care in England can better support them around sex and relationships. The paper focuses on the voices of queer autistic participants and those who felt their identities, desires, practices, or relationships fell outside the boundaries of cisgender heterosexuality.

Methods:

This study employed online text-based asynchronous forum-style focus groups. Five focus groups, each with 8–10 participants, were conducted, with 48 participants in total. These were closed, anonymous, and ran for six weeks, facilitated by an autistic researcher as autistic-only spaces. Queer theory and neuroqueer theory provide the theoretical framework for the paper.

Findings and Discussion:

More than sixty percent of participants did not identify as cisgender and heterosexual. Participants were clear that professionals supporting them needed to move beyond normative understandings of gender, sexuality, and relationships so they could support autistic people in embracing diversity in relationship configurations, sleeping and living arrangements, sexualities, and sexual practices. Many participants, particularly those diagnosed later in life, said they had lacked knowledge of alternative sex and relationship structures and practices. They felt this had limited their ability to choose relationships most responsive to their needs.

Implications for Practice:

These findings highlight the need for neuro- and queer-affirming sex education, information, and support for autistic people at all ages to enhance their sexual well-being and safety. They also have implications for those supporting individuals around home, housing, and independent living. While these alternative relationship structures may not align with conventional ideals, they can be neuro-affirming, safe, fulfilling, and pleasurable.

(11) Reproductive Justice Redefined: Challenging Ableism and Advocating for Disabled Parents' Rights

Claire Azzopardi Lane¹

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Introduction:

Historically, ableist beliefs have positioned disabled people outside the realm of reproduction, undermining their reproductive autonomy and implying an incompatibility between disability and parenting. This exclusion has contributed to a lack of information, policies, and services that support disabled parents, violating their reproductive rights.

Aims & Objectives:

This research addresses the historical and societal challenges faced by disabled individuals regarding their rights to parent and raise children, framing these issues within the broader concept of reproductive justice.

Methods:

The author conducted qualitative research, including interviews with disabled parents and professionals who support them, to explore their experiences.

Findings:

The research highlighted significant gaps in policies and practices that neglect disabled parents and undermine their parenting experiences. The findings revealed that the lack of accessibility and societal ableist views rendered parenting a negative experience for many disabled individuals.

Conclusion:

Structural and institutional barriers, including limited resources and support services, further exacerbated their challenges.

Implications for Practice:

The study calls for sensitivity and awareness training for health and care professionals, emphasizing the importance of competence-based assessments and evidence-based parenting skills training. These measures are especially crucial for parents with intellectual disabilities. The research concludes with recommendations for improving professional training and expanding support services to address the specific needs of disabled parents, aiming to combat the persistent ableist attitudes and structural failings.

(18) Silent Struggles: The Intersection of Disability and LGBTQ+ Identity in Conservative Cultural Settings

Claire Azzopardi Lane¹, Matthew Vassallo, Andrew Azzopardi

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Intro:

Recent sociopolitical changes have improved the rights of sexually and/or gender-diverse individuals, but social perceptions remain slow to evolve, particularly for disabled persons who face additional stigma. Disabled individuals are often desexualized or pressured to conform to heteronormative norms, complicating their experiences of coming out.

Aim & Objectives:

This article examines the socio-cultural influences on the coming out experiences of disabled people identifying with sexual and/or gender minorities in a Catholic, insular context.

Methods:

Using a qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with four groups: disabled LGBT individuals, professionals in the field, NGO representatives, and disability service providers.

Findings:

Key findings highlight themes of isolation, vulnerability, and dependency, which are often compounded by close-knit communities that infantilize and desexualize disabled persons, limiting their authentic sexual expression.

Conclusion & Implications for Practice:

The study underscores the need for both disability and LGBT support services to invest in targeted initiatives for disabled LGBT individuals and their families, helping to dismantle the barriers faced by those with intersecting minority identities.

(21) Pride4All: Accessibility, Representation, and Radical Welcoming for the (Dis)abled in the Pride Movement

Carmen Yau¹

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Pride events facilitate meaningful interactions with LGBT peers including basking in the solidarity of the community. The nutshell of Pride Parade is equal rights, but it has often lacked in one key area of equality- disability. Most of the accessibility facilities and services in Pride are mostly on wheelchair accessibility and BSL interpretation. However, people with disability not only find the Pride Parade full of obstructions and trip hazards, but they also do not feel included and welcomed in the event, particularly for the blind, deaf, and neurodiverse people. The number of neurodiverse participants increased significantly from 6,000 in 2023 to 17,000 in 2024. Therefore, an inclusive and accessible Pride requires a concerted effort to acknowledge and respond to the rights and needs of disabled people.

This 3 -year action research aims to enhance and improve the accessibility and representation of disabled people by refining accessibility for Pride events. This project has three objectives as follows:

First, to operationalize and co-produce the accessibility benchmark for Pride in terms of information and communication, obstacle-free routes with accessible facilities, inclusive assembly spaces, and training of Pride organizers and volunteers.

Second, to unearth the practice wisdom and effective tactics to alleviate the representation of the disabled in Pride. The project adopts Sarah While’s four forms of participation: nominal, instrumental, representative and transformative to consolidate my practice experience to promote the participation of the disabled community over the past three years.

Third, to explore an intersectional approach & radical welcoming space for the disabled community. The experimentation of “Quiet Pride” marks the shift from taking disability accessibility from a social model to the inventive intersectional model of disability. It explores how Pride responds to distinctive challenges and radically welcomes people with different forms of disability.

(22) Mirrored Paths to Self-Acceptance: The Interwoven Processes of Self-Compassion and Queer Identity Development.

Doug Crews¹

¹*Belmont University, Nashville, United States*

Introduction:

This presentation examines the parallel processes of self-compassion and queer identity development, proposing a theoretical framework that views them as mirrored journeys of self-acceptance, resistance to internalized stigma, and personal flourishing. This work is especially timely given the shifting political climate surrounding LGBTQ+ rights, as it emphasizes the role of self-compassion in supporting queer individuals in navigating identity development within often hostile sociopolitical contexts.

Aim and Objectives:

The aim of this presentation is to illuminate how self-compassion—recognition, acceptance, and resilience-building—parallels stages of queer identity development, even under societal pressure. Objectives include (1) mapping the shared stages in both processes, (2) exploring how self-compassion can support queer individuals in resisting societal and internalized judgments, and (3) proposing practical applications of this framework for social work practice.

Findings and Discussion:

The theoretical model suggests both processes begin with recognition of difference (emotional pain in self-compassion; identity in queer development), proceed through stages of exploration, resistance to judgment, and community connection, and culminate in self-integration and flourishing. In a climate where LGBTQ+ rights and identities are increasingly politicized, this framework highlights self-compassion as a vital resource for queer individuals to manage identity-related stress, internalized stigma, and societal hostility.

Implications for Social Work Practice:

Recognizing this mirroring offers social work practitioners tools to empower queer clients by fostering self-compassion as an adjunct to identity development support, especially in challenging political environments. Practitioners can integrate self-compassion exercises into therapeutic settings to reinforce clients' capacity for self-acceptance and resilience, ultimately promoting mental health and authentic living. By emphasizing self-compassion as a tool for queer identity development, social workers can cultivate inclusive practices that honor the unique challenges and strengths within LGBTQIA+ communities, mediating the effects of the current sociopolitical climate.

(23) Exploring LGB Persons' Experience of Self-Compassion in Their Coming Out Narratives

Doug Crews¹

¹*Belmont University, Nashville, United States*

Introduction:

Coming out with a marginalized identity can present ongoing challenges across the lifespan for lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) individuals. This process often intersects with daily lived experiences of gender and sexuality, requiring resilience and self-compassion as individuals navigate societal stigma and internalized fears.

Aim & Objectives:

This study investigates how self-compassion supports LGB individuals in the coming-out process, viewing coming out as an evolving journey rather than a single event. By exploring participants' narratives, this research aims to illuminate how self-compassion aids in buffering negative self-perceptions and fostering resilience amid heteronormative social pressures.

Methods:

A qualitative approach was used, grounded in Germer's (2009) self-compassion framework, which encompasses aversion, curiosity, tolerance, allowing, and friendship. Sixteen participants shared their coming-out experiences, reflecting on the role of self-compassion in their journeys. Thematic analysis was used to explore how each stage of self-compassion mirrored stages in LGB identity development.

Findings/Outcomes:

Findings reveal a strong alignment between the self-compassion process and LGB identity development, highlighting coming out as a continuous, lifelong process. Participants emphasized the daily integration of their sexual identities with self-compassion, describing moments of resilience, acceptance, and community belonging as critical to their sense of self.

Discussion/Conclusion:

The study underscores that self-compassion enables LGB individuals to approach their identities with greater resilience and self-acceptance throughout life. Viewing coming out as a lifelong process helps mental health professionals better understand the ongoing challenges LGB clients face and the value of self-compassion in therapeutic settings.

Implication(s) for Practice:

Integrating self-compassion frameworks can enhance mental health interventions for LGB individuals by supporting them in the everyday lived experiences of gender and sexuality. Mental health professionals who recognize the lifelong nature of coming out and the role of self-compassion are better positioned to offer empathetic, effective support for LGB clients navigating marginalization and identity formation.

(24) Blossoming from the Mud: Comic Art as a Means for Transformative Compassion in LGBTQ+ Activism

Phillip Joy¹

¹*Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Canada*

Introduction:

Feelings of isolation and disconnectedness are increasing, impacting both individual and societal well-being. For LGBTQ+ individuals, cis-heteronormative norms often intensify these feelings, fostering stigma and alienation. Research into the experiences of compassion within LGBTQ+ communities may offer pathways to counter these challenges by bridging divides and promoting inclusivity.

Aim & Objectives:

This study aimed to use art to convey research findings on compassion among LGBTQ+ individuals, exploring how compassion can drive societal change and transformation.

Methods:

Guided by poststructuralism and queer theory, we conducted twenty semi-structured interviews with LGBTQ+ participants across Canada. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed using Foucauldian discourse analysis, focusing on how compassion is socially constructed. Findings were collaboratively transformed into a 10-page comic series through a co-creative process with artists, making insights accessible through visual storytelling.

Findings/Outcomes:

Three themes emerged: (1) (un)learning compassion within chosen families and queer mentorship, (2) exploring identities through generative compassion, and (3) envisioning queer futures through self-compassion. Fifteen comics were created to represent these themes, enhancing accessibility and bridging academic and public audiences.

Discussion/Conclusion:

The study demonstrates that compassion within LGBTQ+ communities serves as a transformative force, challenging societal norms and fostering resilience, self-acceptance, and community. Compassion emerges as a subversive act that builds inclusive spaces and supportive relationships. Art-based knowledge translation, such as comics, effectively communicates these findings to a broad audience, promoting empathy and understanding.

Implications for Social Work Practice:

Social work practitioners can support LGBTQ+ communities by fostering compassionate relationships, such as chosen families and mentorship. Art-based approaches like comics can make complex emotional experiences accessible, enhancing engagement and empathy.

(25) Understanding Menstruation Outcomes Using Objectification Theory

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Aim & Objectives:

The present study investigated premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD) symptoms using an objectification theory framework, hypothesizing that sexist experiences would be positively associated with PMDD and that greater reported self-surveillance and body shame would partly explain these associations.

Methods:

A large, diverse sample of U.S. adult cisgender women were recruited to complete a large online cross-sectional survey that included measures of experiences of sexism (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995), self-surveillance and body shame (Objectified Body Consciousness Scale; McKinley & Hyde, 1996), and PMDD symptoms (Endicott et al., 2005).

Findings/Outcomes:

We tested for mediation based on objectification theory using multiple regression. First, sexism was positively associated with higher levels of self-surveillance ($B=.17$, $p=.003$). Both sexism ($B=.24$, $p<.001$) and self-surveillance ($B=.62$, $p<.001$) were associated with higher levels of body shame. Sexism was significantly and positively associated with PMDD ($B=12.46$, $p<.001$). With the mediators in the model, sexism continued to be significantly associated with depressive symptoms, but the association was attenuated ($B=10.78$, $p<.001$); body shame was significantly and positively associated with PMDD ($B=4.46$, $p<.001$), but self-surveillance was not significant. We estimated the completely standardized indirect effect of sexism on depressive symptoms through self-surveillance and body shame: sexism to PMDD through body shame ($B = .04$, C.I. [.02, .06]) and the sequential hypothesis of sexism to PMDD through self-surveillance and body shame ($B = .02$, C.I. [.002, .03]).

Discussion/Conclusion:

Results demonstrated support for partial mediation of the objectification theory model applied to PMDD in a large, diverse sample of U.S. adult cisgender women.

Implications for Practice:

Findings can help inform tailored mental health interventions for women with PMDD, who may report high levels of self-surveillance and body shame that may exacerbate symptoms, and if left untreated, pose challenges for their health and well-being. Implications for future research and clinical practice will be discussed.

(26) Queer Lens in Focus: A Photovoice Project with LGBTQ+ Refugees living in Athens, Greece

Moshoula Capous-Desyllas¹

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This research project illustrates the power of using the participatory, arts-based methodology of photovoice to capture the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ refugees and asylum seekers living in Athens, Greece. Photovoice methodology entails giving cameras to marginalized groups to photo-document their experiences. In collaboration with the LGBTQ+ Refugees Welcome Collective, we implemented photovoice in order to place the power to create art & represent knowledge in the hands of the participants themselves. This participatory research process can serve to empower refugees and asylum seekers and encourage peacemaking between cultures and communities, while reaching a broader audience beyond academia.

Findings from the in-depth interviews and photographs produced by the participants highlights the social, political and economic challenges of displaced LGBTQ+ people from Syria, Iraq, Uganda, Cameroon, Pakistan, and Cuba, who hold intersecting identities related to race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, nationality, and citizenship status. Exiled from their home countries, the detrimental effects of homophobia and transphobia continued to manifest within the refugee camps in Greece by their own ethnic communities.

This research illuminates the strength and resilience of LGBTQ+ refugees and asylum seekers as they negotiate identity, express hope for a better life, identify needed resources, and grapple with physical, emotional, and symbolic notions of home through photography. Their images document their migration to Greece, the loved ones they left behind and the new communities they formed along the way, as they affirm their identities, build solidarity, create peace within and among themselves, and celebrate their survival.

(28) Formation, Operation, and Maintenance of a Queer Community Advisory Board

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Aim:

This presentation explores the creation of a Community Advisory Board (CAB) of LGBTQ+ parents and healthcare providers, designed to guide research to advance health equity for LGBTQ+ families with infants in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

Objectives:

Describe the role of a CAB in health equity research.

Examine the impact of NICU experiences on LGBTQ+ family health.

Outline a community-engaged, intersectional approach to advancing health equity for LGBTQ+ NICU families.

Methods:

We describe the formation, operation, and maintenance phases of our CAB (Newman et al., 2011). Inclusion criteria for CAB members included: 18 years or older, live in the U.S., and (a) self-identify as LGBTQ+ and had a child in the NICU at least five years before study initiation, or (b) work in a NICU with LGBTQ+ families and self-identify as LGBTQ+ or an ally.

Findings/Outcomes:

We recruited six CAB members: three LGBTQ+ parents, two healthcare professionals, and one parent who is also a healthcare professional. The CAB met via Zoom to discuss interview questions for a qualitative study of LGBTQ+ parents with NICU experience; we attempted to establish clear procedures, balance power, and define roles. To maintain engagement and transparency, the research team communicated regularly with CAB members, keeping them informed about project progress.

Discussion/Conclusion:

Establishing and operating a CAB was essential to inclusivity, relevance, and ethical integrity of the NICQu Families study. Aligned with community needs and priorities, the CAB offered valuable insights, advocated for the LGBTQ+ community, and refined research questions and interview protocols.

Implication(s) for Practice:

Future research should involve the community at every stage, fostering trust through transparent communication. Researchers must be adaptable to community members' schedules, preferences, and input, prioritizing community-led feedback. Regular check-ins ensure alignment with community needs.

(29) Any reason is valid: How an unexpected abortion disclosure is met by an online community

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This study examines how an unexpected abortion disclosure is received within an online community, framed through a reproductive justice lens. Utilizing qualitative thematic analysis, the study explores responses to a social media post by a prominent influencer. Sixty-three responses, analyzed for themes related to abortion motivations and bystander reactions, reveal nuanced perspectives on abortion experiences and societal attitudes.

Grounded in reproductive justice, the study explores how abortion decisions intersect with social justice issues. Abortion remains a stigmatized and controversial topic, yet one in four women in the U.S. will undergo an abortion by age 45.

The study aims to understand the thoughts and feelings surrounding abortion within an online space, highlighting how reproductive justice issues surface in public narratives. Objectives include analyzing decision-making factors and assessing supportive or stigmatizing responses.

Data were collected from a publicly accessible social media post requesting followers to share their abortion experiences. Content and thematic analyses identified key themes. Ethical considerations ensured confidentiality, with data anonymized and stored securely.

Three primary themes emerged: unhealthy or abusive relationships, unreadiness for parenthood (emotional, financial, or physical), and other complex reasons, such as forced abortions or sexual assault. Additionally, a supplemental theme highlighted significant bystander support, with many respondents emphasizing that “any reason is valid.” The findings reflect a supportive community atmosphere, contrasting divisive societal narratives.

The results align with previous research, underscoring the intentionality and complexity of abortion decisions. However, the study acknowledges limitations in generalizability due to the specific social media platform used.

These findings highlight opportunities for leveraging online platforms to foster supportive communities and inform policy aimed at reducing stigma and enhancing reproductive justice. Social workers can use this evidence to advocate for compassionate, inclusive practices in reproductive health care.

(30) Needs and Expectations of Emerging Adults from Sexual Violence Prevention Programs in Türkiye

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Although sexual violence prevention programs are shown to create desired changes in violence-related attitudes, knowledge, and self-defense skills, their impact on overall rates of sexual violence has been debated. Understanding what emerging adults expect from these programs can inform future practices tailored to their needs from a collaborative perspective.

Aims and Objectives:

The current study aims to investigate emerging adults' preferences, expectations, and needs from sexual violence prevention programs in Türkiye, a heteropatriarchal context with limited systematic efforts for prevention and no formal sexuality education.

Methods:

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach with quantitative and qualitative parts. The quantitative sample comprised 601 participants aged 18-30 who completed an online survey about their needs from prevention programs. The qualitative part involved semi-structured individual interviews with 24 participants aged 22-30, analyzed using thematic analysis.

Findings:

The quantitative survey results showed that the participants expected the programs to primarily cover sexual consent and, secondly, safe/healthy sexuality, followed by the topics of sexual communication and birth control/protection. They preferred either individual counseling, awareness groups, or training formats to deliver such programs. The qualitative part demonstrated that the participants found it necessary to take preventive steps at the individual (e.g., self-awareness, positive body image), interpersonal (e.g., open sexual communication, boundaries), and socio-cultural (e.g., gender roles, sexual stereotypes, societal pressure) levels. They also mentioned the importance of actively using social media and forming support systems for prevention.

Discussion:

The findings indicated that emerging adults viewed sexual violence prevention from a multifaceted perspective and highlighted their need for support at the individual and interpersonal levels as well as necessary sociocultural changes.

Implications for Practice:

Practitioners can focus on supporting self-awareness about sexuality and body, increasing knowledge of sexuality, developing relational skills, and challenging sexual inequalities to address sexual coercion and violence from a preventive perspective.

(31) Comprehensive & Positive Sex Education: A Social Work Essential in Violence Prevention

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Positive and comprehensive sexuality education is an effective tool for the primary prevention of sexual violence. Equitable access to sexual education and reproductive care are salient social justice concerns in the present political landscape. Despite the need, there is evidence that social work students feel they have inadequate training to help clients with sexual issues, and report feeling discomfort addressing topics of sex. This discomfort can limit the provision of needed behavioral health services. Education is associated with improved competence and comfort addressing topics related to sexuality with clients, creating an impetus for improved course offerings for students in helping professions or careers in sexual violence prevention. Thus, research that critically examines pedagogical approaches and course content related to sex education and violence prevention is needed.

In this workshop, speakers will present on the need for comprehensive and positive sex education within social work curriculum, making the case that comprehensive, positive education on human sexual development, behavior, violence prevention, and policy is imperative to produce a competent workforce. The organizer will discuss the development and delivery of a Sexual Behavior & Society course, including conceptualization, selection of course materials, centering sexuality inclusivity, sample course activities, strategies to overcome student discomfort, and feedback from the first cohorts of students. An early career faculty presenter who works in direct practice will discuss the utility of expanded course offerings from a current training perspective. The final presenters, mid-career faculty members, will describe their perspectives on current funding priorities for research on the primary prevention of sexual violence. The goals of the workshop are to describe the importance of conducting social justice-oriented research on sex through the lenses of critical theories, and to enumerate the ethical responsibility of social work programs to provide balanced education on the range of human sexuality and behaviors.

(32) Childfree Women's Resistance to Pronatalist Pressures and Stigma in Türkiye: A Case For Feminist Mental Health Care Practices

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Being childfree is a reproductive choice exercised by many individuals and couples. However, this choice is treated as “abnormal,” particularly for women in pronatalist and traditional societies where their roles are primarily defined by motherhood and family obligations. Türkiye is one such context where choosing to be childfree increases the risk of experiencing societal pressures and stigmatization in social relationships, which, in turn, poses a threat to women's mental health and well-being.

Aims and Objectives:

The present study aims to explore how childfree individuals cope with and resist the pressures they face because of their reproductive choices.

Methods:

The study was designed as a small-scale project that utilized a feminist grounded-theory methodology and explored childfree individuals' biographical accounts in Türkiye. For data collection, 38 interviews were conducted with 35 women and 3 men aged 24-51.

Findings:

The analysis revealed that childfree women face stigmas and experience the burden of explaining themselves in different social settings, including their family of origin, partners, friends, colleagues, and healthcare professionals. On the one hand, they developed coping strategies that range from weathering questions about why they “still” do not have children to using humor. They became more confrontational as they age. On the other hand, they shared periods or moments of self-doubt, confusion, and fear about their reproductive choices as well as conflict in their relationships that undermined their well-being.

Discussion:

The findings revealed that childfree women experience and resist a unique stigmatization process that can be described as gaslighting at the societal and relational levels.

Implications for Practice:

The findings indicate that feminist practices that support the empowerment of childfree women and individuals are needed. These practices need to focus on challenging societal pressures, addressing their stigmatization experiences, and supporting their resistance, reproductive rights, and mental health.

(34) From Abortions to Ze/Zir: Teaching Sexuality Content in a Social Work Program

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Introduction:

Sexuality is incredibly expansive, covering topics such as identity politics, consent practices, sexual and reproductive health, romantic and sexual relationships, intimate partner violence, aging, disability, kink, non-monogamy, sex toys, sexuality education, navigating trauma, communication skills, policies and laws, and so much more, and these are all relevant to the clients and communities who are supported by social workers. Yet, these important topics are often left out of social work education settings around the world, or are supposedly included, but usually just quickly given lip service and then passed over.

Aims/Objectives:

This workshop, led by an associate professor and board-certified sexuality educator, will allow learners to:

- 1) compare both integrative and course specific ways to include sexuality content in social work educational programs;
- 2) practice some sexuality centered classroom activities/assignments; and
- 3) develop a plan for integrating this content into their social work education spaces.

Methods:

Educational methods in this workshop include a short presentation; sharing of sample syllabi, assignments, and activities; and both small and large group discussions.

Discussion and Implications for Practice:

It is against social work values for social workers to be unprepared to speak to and engage with sexuality topics, given the clear likelihood that these topics will arise in their practice, regardless of what facet of our profession (including micro, mezzo, and macro) they are in. By being in a sexuality affirming space where this conversation can take place without much of the judgement, stigma, and shame that often surrounds discussions of sexuality, we will share ideas and successes, tackle challenges and potential barriers, and work together co-create a vision for a world in which social work education has fully integrated these topics as part of basic knowledge for all emerging social workers.

(35) Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Problematic Sexual Behavior Among Adolescents: An Integrated Approach

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Aim & Objectives:

Adolescents with problem sexual behaviors (PSB-A) have elevated rates of childhood adversity and trauma. Early trauma can contribute to risk factors associated with sexual offending during adolescence, including emotional dysregulation, sexual arousal, difficulties with interpersonal relationships, and cognitive processing struggles. Yet, treatment programs for PSB-A often do not address such trauma sequela and may predominately focus on reducing offending behaviors. It is thus critical to train PSB-A clinicians to address both PSB and trauma. Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) combined with the gold standard of PSB work has the potential to provide therapists with the guidance they need to address both needs simultaneously.

Methods:

We have created and tested a conceptual model in a pilot feasibility study on training and implementation of TF-CBT for PSB-A in community practice and juvenile justice settings. We trained staff in TF-CBT for PSB-A and had bi-monthly consultation sessions to provide fidelity checks and on-going supervision/support for those clinicians.

Findings/Outcomes:

Results showed promising trends and some statistically significant findings when youth and caregiver reports were analyzed. Overall, given the small sample size, the vast majority of outcomes of interest did not yield statistical significance. However, youth reported reductions from pre-to post-test in the extent to which trauma interferes with general happiness (and caregivers reported reductions from pre-to post-test in adolescent problem sexual behaviors. Although the results were not statistically significant, adolescents also report reductions in problem sexual behaviors.

Discussion/Conclusion:

TF-CBT for PSB-A has promise for clinicians who are working with individuals with both trauma and PSB. We will also discuss our current project where we are conducting a quasi-experimental design to compare this approach with treatment as usual.

Implication(s) for Practice:

We offer practical trauma-specific implications for practitioners who are struggling with how to integrate these two aspects of their clients' backgrounds.

(36) What contributes to youth sexual offending?

Melissa Grady¹, Jamie Yoder¹

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Aim & Objectives:

Early adverse relational experiences, when coupled with victimization, may disrupt normative neurological development via executive functioning, and create vulnerabilities for behavioral problems. Additionally, there is evidence to suggest traumatic events contribute to insecure attachments styles that link to sexual violence. To date, there is a dearth of research examining how traumatic events, PTSD, and insecure attachments collectively contribute to sexual offending in a sample of youth.

Methods:

The studies used in this presentation will be combination of multiple studies conducted by the presenters that have examined various factors related to sexual offending among youth. As such, this presentation will discuss various studies that have been used to test the relationships between various risk factors associated with sexual abusive behaviors.

Findings/Outcomes:

The presentation will present the authors' conceptual model that has been tested regarding the various pathways that contribute to sexual violence. These include parental qualities/characteristics, attachment relationships, different forms of maltreatment, including abuse, neglect, and other forms of adversity.

Discussion/Conclusion:

The etiology of sexual offending is quite complex, but there are certain pathways that are stronger than others. This presentation will highlight those pathways and identify potential primary, secondary, and tertiary intervention strategies that can be used to address sexual violence in our communities.

Implication(s) for Practice:

Micro practice implications include the need to focus addressing risk factors associated with sexual offending, such as executive functioning and behavioral and emotional dysregulation. In addition, caregiver responsiveness and the quality of the relationship is an important area for intervention. Policy implications include the need for the justice system to include trauma-informed care and parent training, as well as to consider how addressing macroeconomic issues, such as poverty, might contribute to a reduction in the incidence of sexual harm.

(37) "I know who I am": Draw-and-Tell Conversations with Gender Creative Children

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Introduction:

Gender creative (GC) children experience stigma, victimization, and low self-esteem, resulting in healthcare avoidance and unfavorable physical and mental health outcomes. Gender affirmation from family is the most protective factor, and pediatric providers help facilitate support. Healthcare experiences of elementary-aged GC children are largely absent from the literature; most accounts rely on adult-proxies.

Aims & Objectives:

To understand what helps GC children feel safe to express gender-related thoughts, feelings, and experiences, who they talk to about their gender, and how they experience medical visits.

Methods:

Informed by the presenting author's lived experiences, we conducted a qualitative community-engaged study using a Draw-and-Tell Conversations, facilitating communication through drawing, writing, and telling stories. We purposively sampled elementary-aged GC children (n=12) residing in the United States. Participants were predominantly white (83%, 17% mixed race) and middle class. Participants' drawings of their important people and medical experiences served as stimuli for conversation. Caregivers completed surveys to contextualize findings. Analysis involved reflexive thematic content analysis paired with I-poetry. We reviewed themes with community partners for methodological triangulation.

Findings:

Participants expressed discomfort in medical settings and endorsed having confidants with whom they could discuss their gender. Drawing prior to talking helped participants formulate their ideas and express themselves with confidence. Drawings represented "world making," offering a window into children's beliefs in the magical as sources of comfort and meaning-making.

Conclusion:

There are missed opportunities to positively impact children's health and caregiver-child relationships when their perspectives are overlooked in the healthcare context. This interdisciplinary study provides first-hand accounts of how children navigate their gender identity in relation to others and offers recommendations to improve care.

Implications for Practice:

Social workers are uniquely positioned to bridge medical and educational settings and establish gender affirming environments to support GC children, following the child-informed recommendations presented in this study.

(38) Social Work Abolitionist & Anarchist Imaginaries: Effecting Change for the Gender & Sexually Diverse

Nick Mulé¹

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Spurred by instances of police violence against Black, Indigenous, 2SLGBTQ+ communities, those experiencing mental health challenges and the poor, there is a growing and persistent public outrage against the racist behaviours of the police particularly against Black and Indigenous people that include carding, assaults, and numerous murders. These high-profile cases in North America, among numerous police-related incidences of violence represent a long history of law enforcement treating these communities differently. The role of the police, prisons, and coercive behaviour towards these communities and Indigenous Treaties is integrated, just as many within these communities are socially intersectionally located.

In response there has been a resurgence of abolitionist and anarchistic perspectives underscored by radical views, often pointing to social work as an alternative to policing. This requires a process of deep reflection that calls upon social work to critically examine its alliances in the criminal-justice system and potentially reposition itself by exploring new opportunities for communities and their development by defunding, disarming, dismantling, and abolishing the police and prisons.

Questioned is the heavily weighted role of our criminal justice systems; social work's relationship to them; and a critical examination of the positioning of social work's social justice values therein. Radical perspectives are explored to induce abolitionist and anarchistic imaginaries towards creating a less penalizing future that decreases the role of the police and prisons, towards caring community development particularly for vulnerable gender and sexually diverse communities. Recommendations are provided to reflexively decontextualize whether the profession's guiding principles and ethics are being adhered to in our current penalizing climate via the criminal justice system.

(39) Searching for social work in queer activism and the tackle of social death: the case of Greece

Panagiotis Pentaris¹

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Introduction & Aims:

This paper is part of a larger study examining the lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals in Greece and the role of social work in advancing queer activism.

Methods & Aims:

Utilizing in-depth interviews with 73 LGBTQIA+ individuals and 34 social workers, the study explores the intersection between social work and queer activism in the fight for equality, equity, and liberation.

Findings:

The findings reveal that organizational policies within social work often act as barriers to engaging in social activism. Many social workers refrained from active participation in queer activism, citing a lack of personal connection to the cause. Notably, only social workers who identified as LGBTQIA+ themselves viewed the cause as worthy of active engagement.

Discussion:

These results underscore the importance of social connectedness, particularly how a sense of belonging and identification with marginalized groups influences professional advocacy and activism. The findings suggest that if social work remains disconnected from queer activism, it risks reinforcing social death—a state where LGBTQIA+ individuals are symbolically or socially excluded.

Implications:

The study highlights the need for re-evaluating social work policies to foster greater inclusivity and activism, with potential implications for enhancing social workers' roles in promoting LGBTQIA+ rights and advancing social justice.

(40) Prevalence and Mental Health Impact of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Change Efforts among LGBTQ+ Individuals in Hong Kong

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Introduction:

Sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts (SOGICE) are practices aimed at altering diverse gender and sexual identities. Despite widespread condemnation from professional organizations, these practices persist in regions where non-heterosexual and non-cisgender identities are heavily stigmatized.

Aim & Objectives:

This study investigated SOGICE prevalence and its mental health impacts on LGBTQ+ individuals in Hong Kong.

Methods:

The study surveyed 1,562 LGBTQ+ individuals using a questionnaire assessing experiences and motivations of SOGICE, internalized stigma, depression symptoms, and suicidality.

Findings/Outcomes:

Results showed that 27.0% of participants had undergone SOGICE in their lifetime, with 24.8% attempting to change their sexual orientation and 12.2% their gender identity. Among those who experienced SOGICE, 64.5% reported receiving external pressure to change. The major motivations were avoiding social discrimination (69.0%) and gaining family acceptance (63.7%). SOGICE participants exhibited significantly higher levels of internalized stigma, depression symptoms, and suicidal ideation compared to those without SOGICE exposure.

Discussion/Conclusion:

The substantial SOGICE prevalence and external pressure to change highlight the significant social and familial influences driving these practices in Hong Kong. The strong association between SOGICE experiences and adverse mental health outcomes aligns with growing international evidence documenting the harmful effects of SOGICE.

Implication(s) for Practice:

Social workers should develop competency in LGBTQ+ affirming approaches to address internalized stigma and promote positive identity development. This includes creating safe spaces for identity exploration while helping clients resist external pressure to undergo SOGICE. Additionally, it is important to establish support groups and networks for SOGICE survivors and advocate for policies that protect LGBTQ+ individuals from these harmful practices.

(41) Heteronormativity as a Barrier to Social Service Accessibility for People with Refugee Background

Inka Söderström¹

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Aim & Objectives:

Access to social services is vital for the realization of social rights. This presentation discusses social service accessibility from the viewpoints of non-heterosexual people with refugee background in Finland, particularly focusing on the barriers created by heteronormativity. In the Nordic context, earlier research on heteronormativity in social services is scarce. This study aims to fill this gap and provide tools for social workers to increase accessibility when working with LGBTQ+ populations.

Methods:

The data consists of qualitative interviews with non-heterosexual people with refugee background (n=11) and with social workers (n=12) carried out in Finland in 2019–2020 as part of a finished doctoral research. The data was analyzed with qualitative thematic analysis. The theoretical approach follows critical social work, queer studies, and decolonizing studies.

Findings:

The results suggest that social work in reception centers and in immigrant social services is shaped by heteronormativity. Heteronormativity intersects with white normativity, and both are reinforced by the dominant neoliberal management style. Heteronormativity becomes visible as silences around non-normative sexuality and gender, stereotypes, queer blindfolding, and difficulties in bringing up issues related to sexuality or gender. Heteronormativity increases experiences of minority stress among service users as well as insecurity among social workers.

Conclusions:

Heteronormativity creates barriers for non-heterosexual people with refugee background who seek support from social services. It undermines the realization of social rights of LGBTQ+ populations. LGBTQ+ perspectives are underrepresented in Finnish social work education and research, which points to the structural character of heteronormativity. This calls for structural changes in social work education.

Implications for Practice:

The results highlight the importance of increased knowledge on LGBTQ+ perspectives in securing access to social services and realization of social rights for non-heterosexual populations. LGBTQ+ affirmative, trauma-informed, and anti-oppressive social work practice prevents minority stress and increases trust in social services.

(42) Seahorse Dads: Reframing Transgender Pregnancy and Childbirth

Gavin Fraser¹

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Many transgender and gender diverse (TGD) people participate in family planning and experience pregnancy and childbirth. Narratives involving TGD birthing people are frequently made invisible or shared with an emphasis on the challenges and barriers they often face. This poster reframes deficit-based narratives using strengths-based and reproductive justice perspectives.

Four contexts are identified to highlight TGD birthing people's strengths and pursuit of joy as an act of resistance. (1) TGD birthing people differentially prioritize gender affirmation and pregnancy, finding harmony in their gender identity and desire for children in personally meaningful ways. (2) TGD birthing people navigate pregnancy and childbirth within a social context. They demonstrate an intimate understanding of systemic gender norms and navigate social and healthcare environments in ways that minimize risk of harm from discrimination and gender dysphoria. (3) TGD birthing people make decisions involving disclosure of pregnancy status and gender identity, as well as childbirth preferences, based on their determination of what is in their and their unborn child's best interests. (4) TGD birthing people strive to parent in safe and healthy environments, while navigating increasingly hostile socio-political landscapes.

Pregnancy and childbirth are normal life events. They are not something that happen to TGD people, but rather TGD people hold agency and actively influence their experiences of pregnancy and childbirth.

(43) PnP/chemsex: A Spectrum of Emotions - A Photovoice Research Project

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Introduction:

Chemsex involves the use of psychoactive substances in a sexual context among men of sexual diversity, as well as trans and non-binary people. The substances most commonly associated with chemsex are crystal meth, mephedrone, GHB, and ketamine. The motivations for participating in chemsex are diverse, but they primarily revolve around seeking sexual pleasure, meeting new people, and coping with challenging emotions. Chemsex is also linked to various impacts on physical, mental, and sexual health. The motivations and consequences of chemsex can be understood as emotional experiences. However, current research on chemsex mainly emphasizes the emotions surrounding pleasure and shame.

Aim & objectives:

The aim of this presentation is to highlight the various emotions experienced throughout a chemsex trajectory, as well as to consider the impacts of harm reduction strategies on these emotions.

Methods:

As part of a PhD research project in social work at Université du Québec à Montréal, 10 people with chemsex experiences took part in a photovoice project. Participants captured photographs to represent the emotions associated to their chemsex experiences and took part in two research interviews. The collected data were analyzed through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

Findings:

Participants discussed a significant diversity of emotions associated with the practice of chemsex, including loneliness, guilt, fear, and hope. According to the participants, harm reduction strategies significantly lessen the grip of uncomfortable emotions, such as guilt and shame, and allow for greater peace with oneself and the practice of chemsex.

Discussion and implications for practice:

Understanding the full range of emotions that can be experienced in the context of chemsex supports the development of tools and interventions from a harm reduction perspective, as these promote individual and community mental health from an empowerment standpoint.

(44) Reclaiming Sexual Well-being: Integrating Pleasure and Emotional Literacy in Social Work Interventions for Sexualized Substance Use Among gbMSM

Maxime Blanchette¹, Mathieu Goyette², Jorge Flores-Aranda², Karine Bertrand³

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Introduction:

Interventions for sexualized substance use (SSU) among gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (gbMSM) often focus on harm reduction strategies emphasizing biological risks like HIV and STBBIs. These approaches frequently overlook the central role of sexual pleasure, emotional literacy and sociosexual norms in SSU and recovery. Social workers must address these dimensions to support holistic well-being by fostering inclusive, affirming, and client-centred practices.

Aim & Objectives:

This presentation explores the integration of sexual satisfaction, emotional literacy, and the role of sociosexual norms into interventions, providing social workers with strategies to address SSU and recovery effectively while promoting overall well-being.

Methods:

In-depth interviews with 20 gbMSM in Quebec, Canada, explored perspectives on sexual satisfaction, pleasure, and recovery from SSU. A sexual health framework and insights from an individual with lived experience guided thematic analysis.

Findings/Outcomes:

Participants identified SSU as both a means of enhanced sexual exploration and a barrier to lasting emotional and sexual satisfaction. Recovery required relearning sexual satisfaction through, among others, emotional literacy, boundary-setting, and redefining sexual norms. Social workers can support gbMSM recovery by fostering self-connection and exploring the role of explicit and implicit sociosexual norms.

Discussion/Conclusion:

Findings emphasize the importance of addressing sexual pleasure, emotional literacy, and the role of sociosexual norms in SSU interventions. By integrating sex-positive approaches and prioritizing sexual well-being, social workers can reduce stigma, foster resilience, and promote recovery.

Implications for Practice:

Social workers can enhance interventions by incorporating frameworks that:

- Address emotional literacy and self-connection in recovery.
- Normalize discussions on sexual pleasure.
- Promote holistic sexual well-being in SSU interventions.
- These approaches empower gbMSM to reclaim sexual satisfaction and emotional literacy in recovery, paving the way to achieving a renewed sense of balance in their lives.

(45) The United State's Relationship with Placing Children on Sex Offender Registries: Documenting Iatrogenic Outcomes

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Introduction:

Compared with adults, children who engage in sexually abusive behavior are developmentally distinct and at far lower likelihood of sexual recidivism. Yet, the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act initiated the inappropriate downward extension of adult policies toward minors.

Aims:

The review of current research evidence explored unintended consequences of SORN requirements across multiple domains of functioning and well-being.

Findings:

Mental health symptoms and suicide attempts were elevated among registered children. Registered children may experience strain in their relationships with family members, peers, school staff, and community members; social isolation due to residence restrictions and stigma associated with perceptions of being listed on a sex offender registry contribute to this social stain. Housing restrictions can force minors to live away from their family, constrain where a person can live based on zoning restrictions, and limit children's ability to live in subsidized housing or rental units. Residence restrictions could require a child to change schools or complete education online. Registered children also face barriers in obtaining a college education, being excluded from receiving federal financial aid. Employment options are limited for registrants, resulting in high unemployment and lower lifetime earning potential. Above all, recidivism rates are not reduced by SORN, and some data suggest SORN may increase sexual recidivism. Violent victimization rates are increased for children with SORN requirements, with registered children reporting feeling less safe and being approached for sex by adults.

Discussion:

Data indicate that children with sexual offenses are at no more risk for sexual reoffending than other delinquent children; thus, there is no empirical need to implement registration requirements for these youth. Registration requirements have demonstrated no positive utility for the management of children with sexually abusive behavior.

Implications:

Considerable evidence supports the implementation of developmentally responsive policy to manage children with sexually abusive behavior.

(46) What Is It Like to Have More Than Two Parents? A Narrative Review of the Experiences of Children Growing Up in Polyparental Families

Sophie Parent¹, Roxane Guay¹, Kévin Lavoie¹

¹*Université Laval, Québec, Canada*

Aim & Objectives:

This communication presents the results of a narrative review aimed at providing an overview of the literature concerning children growing up in polyparental families (i.e., families with more than two parents engaged in polyamorous relationships). To achieve this, the review aimed (1) to examine the lived experiences of children in polyparental families, and (2) to identify the challenges and issues these children face in their daily lives.

Methods:

The review was conducted between February and August 2024, using different databases. The search used keywords related to “child” and “polyparent.” The inclusion criteria were empirical studies in French or English, focusing on the experiences of children in polyparental families. Seven studies, published between 2006 and 2024, were included. Most studies employed qualitative methodologies, with one mixed-methods study. The studies spanned from disciplines such as sociology, education, and gender studies.

Findings/Outcomes:

The review shows that polyparental families take various forms, including different living and co-parenting arrangements. Children typically benefit from the presence of multiple adults, offering financial and emotional support. However, they often struggle to explain their family structure. Parents value the shared responsibilities but express concerns about social stigma, their children being marginalized, and potential legal issues, such as reports to child protective services. The main challenges identified are the lack of legal and social recognition for polyparental families.

Discussion/Conclusion:

The findings highlight how societal norms shape the understanding of family structures and influence laws and policies on children’s well-being. The communication discusses the need for broader societal recognition of polyparental families and their unique needs.

Implications for Practice:

Recommendations for social work practice include inclusive training for engaging with polyparental families and advocating for their legal and social recognition. Future research should further explore the challenges these families face, especially regarding social policies and institutional support.

(47) 'I Was in the Belly of the Lady': A Narrative Review of Literature on the Experience of Children Conceived Through Surrogacy

Roxane Guay¹, Sophie Parent¹, Kévin Lavoie¹

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Aim & Objective:

The aim of this poster is to present the findings of a narrative review of literature on the experiences of children conceived through surrogacy. Despite the concerns expressed about children involved in surrogacy, few studies have examined their perceptions of this practice, as well as its impact on their overall well-being. The objective of this communication is to explore the lived experience of these children to better understand potential psychological issues and their needs.

Method:

Between March and August 2024, we conducted a narrative review across various databases using keywords related to "surrogacy" and "children". Twenty articles (n=20) published between 2014 and 2024 were identified, the majority of which are mixed-methods studies within the discipline of psychology.

Findings/outcomes:

The studies address children's perspectives on the circumstances surrounding their conception, their relationships with the individuals involved, their psychological adjustment, attachment security, and their perception of the practice. The findings indicate that surrogacy and parents' sexual orientation do not directly harm children's development. However, potential challenges may arise from experiencing microaggressions related to their conception by surrogacy and/or family composition.

Discussion:

The experience of stigmatization by families formed by surrogacy can negatively influence parenting styles, which may, in turn, affect the parent-child relationship and the psychological adjustment of children. Increasing the visibility of these families and challenging stereotypes are crucial to validating their experiences and supporting them for the well-being of their children.

Implications for practice:

This literature review provides guidance for adapting and developing interventions tailored to the needs of children and adults involved. It also advocates for the promotion of family diversity within institutional environments and supports public policies regarding this form of assisted reproduction.

(48) Resigning Oneself to Resort Another Women to Have a Child: Parental Trajectories of Women Who Became Mothers Through Surrogacy or Egg Donation

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Aim/Objectives:

This contribution aims to explore the experiences of Canadian women who have used egg donation and/or surrogacy to become mothers, whose uterine sterility, infertility or advanced age constitute the starting points of their parental trajectory. Our goal is to highlight the common obstacles they have faced and the resilience that defines their trajectory, leading them towards assisted reproduction – as the ultimate means – to achieve motherhood.

Method:

This study is part of a larger qualitative research project on assisted maternity in Canada. The results presented in this communication draw on data from semi-structured interviews conducted with 18 Canadian women who resorted to surrogacy and/or egg donation to become mothers. Interviews were conducted in two phases between September 2016 and June 2021.

Findings/outcomes:

The results highlight their journey from the announcement of the impossibility of having a child to their decision to pursue assisted reproduction. Beyond the variability of their experiences, their collective stories all bear witness to suffering, doubts and questions linked to the unfulfilled desire to access motherhood or enable their partner to become a father.

Discussion:

Considering life course theory, we emphasize that the announcement of infertility is a turning point in parental trajectories. While hegemonic femininity still involves becoming a mother, the importance given to genetics in kinship ties postulates “good” ways of becoming a parent, pushing women who resort to assisted procreation further to the margins, particularly those lacking both genetic and gestational ties with their child.

Implications for practice:

The journey towards motherhood is characterized by long procedures, numerous interventions on their bodies, disappointments and self-reflection. It is important to inform social workers about the realities and challenges experienced by these women so they can provide effective support at various stages on the parental trajectory and help them navigate their often-heartbreaking decisions.

(49) Facilitators and Barriers to Queer and Trans Youth Development: Addressing Accessibility and "Isms," Building Collaborations, and Supporting Mental Health in Community-Based Organizations

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This project evaluated how one community-based organization in South-Central Texas facilitated and hindered the positive and social justice development of queer and trans (QT) youth. The findings from this study offer empirical implications for practices that community organizations could use to support queer and trans youth development.

A critical paradigm informed the study design. This perspective reveals how inequitable power relations cause social problems (Foucault, 1980). The first author used a critical ethnography methodology for the data collection (Madison, 2020). Data collection included 70 field observations of organizational meetings and events, individual interviews with 21 QT youth and 15 adults. Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2014) guided the data analysis, which involved initial coding, focused coding, and creating categories.

The organization offers weekly QT youth meetings focused on social support. Youth-focused data revealed how the meetings helped them make friends, realize they're not alone, figure out who they want to be, and find an alternative family. Key barriers to attending the meetings included accessibility (to the meetings), managing overload (emotional, sensory, and logistical), and lacking space for meeting in age-specific groups.

Adult-focused data demonstrated that the weekly youth meetings created an affirming space, built youth confidence, included parents, and provided youth with concrete resources. Barriers to development were identified as not integrating the youth, parents, or community (in organizational decisions), overlooking complaints about racism, sexism, classism, and transphobia, the youth requiring accessibility (to the meetings), losing people (volunteers and youth), and spending priorities.

Recommendations for how organizations can foster QT youth development include: integrating the youth and parents into organizational decision-making and operations, building partnerships with minority communities, making spending priorities align with organizational values, prioritizing accessibility to activities, providing mental health support for the youth (and their families), and creating a strategic plan that addresses each of these items.

(53) »You Are Slow and Unattractive«: Some Aspects of Sexuality of Persons with Disabilities in Croatia

Marko Buljevac¹

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Sexuality and sexual rights are often denied to persons with disabilities in Croatia. Some of them face discrimination and stigmatization based on their sexuality. The aim of this presentation is to get insight into persons with disabilities' perspectives about sexuality and to highlight some aspects of their sexuality.

Mix method questionnaire was used to collect data from 118 adults with disabilities (68 females and 50 males) living in Croatia. The data from closed and open-ended questions was analyzed.

The results provide insight into their perspectives about effects of disability on their sexuality, different problems, issues and challenges related to their sexuality and sexual rights, as well as different sources of support or lack of support related of their right to enjoy all sexual rights. The results show that persons with disabilities in Croatia face many problems, issues and challenges related to their sexuality and sexual rights. The majority of participants had intimate experiences and have a relationship. Disability has significant influence on person's sexuality. The majority of participants experienced different forms of discrimination and stigmatization related to their sexuality and sexual rights.

The conclusion is that persons with disabilities in Croatia are often stigmatized based on their sexual needs, experience lack of understanding about their sexuality, and face different types of denial of their sexual rights. Social workers should be more sensitized and educated how to respect and protect sexual rights of persons with disabilities.

(54) Addressing the Student Recruitment Crisis in Social Work: Challenges and Opportunities

David Galley¹

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This research paper contributes to the literature concerning the gender imbalance within social work and the sparsity of male social work practitioners. It argues for increased gender balance within the profession and reports on a qualitative research study which garnered the perceptions and experiences of thirty-four male social work students and alumni. Participants were drawn from six universities across the United Kingdom (UK). Qualitative data were collated using semi-structured interviews, surveys, field observations and BEM sex role inventory tests. Analysis of the data identified the characteristics and dispositions of males more likely to enter the profession, locating where they can potentially be drawn from. This research is of interest to policy makers wishing to address the low status of the profession and in terms of informing a recruitment strategy for social work, particularly involving secondary and higher education to further promote the profession as one suitable for any gender.

(55) Navigating Normativity – Youth and Social Street Workers Support of Development of Sexuality

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Youth and social street workers in Amsterdam have an important role in supporting the development of sexuality of adolescents and young adults. Youth get only limited sexual developmental support from their parents and their schools. Besides, youth pinpoints preventive social workers as trustworthy professional friends, making them well-placed professionals who educate, help, care and back youths in their development of sexuality.

But what is good support for sexual development? In a normative landscape where contesting views on sexuality are prevalent in and between youths, their pedagogical contexts, their neighborhoods, and under youth and social street workers as well? By focusing on a girls-only event on safety on social media I will show how social work settings can fail to uphold their evident connection to sexual health and sexuality, hardly fighting sexual injustice, or working on sexual empowerment (Pilgrim et al., 2021).

The case I will present during the conference is part of my ethnographic PhD research on youth and social street work in Amsterdam. Through participatory observations of daily work practices, and interviews and focus groups with youth professionals, I aim to address the following research question: How can youth and social street workers develop pedagogical professionalism in their support of adolescents' and young adults' (aged 12–27 years) development of sexuality?

By zooming in on one specific night in youth work I will show the trickiness of possible interventions by youth workers on sexual behavior of youths, deriving from the lack of consensus on sexual ethics. I would like to discuss the implications of the lack of consensus in social work on sexual ethics (Sercombe, 2012).

(56) Minority Ethnic Queer Youth: Navigating Double Marginalization and Mental Health Challenges

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Minority Ethnic Queer Youth (MEQY) are a particularly vulnerable demographic, facing the compounded effects of marginalization due to their sexual orientation or gender identity and their ethnic background. In Denmark, many minority ethnic youth encounter challenges such as racism, discrimination, and cultural expectations imposed by their families and communities. When combined with the struggles associated with being queer, including homophobia and transphobia, these intersecting experiences can significantly heighten the risk of mental health challenges.

This paper draws on in-depth qualitative interviews with 14 Minority Ethnic Queer Youth aged 16–30 years to explore how the intersection of multiple minority positions complicates the development of a healthy and stable sense of self. Such identity development is a critical foundation for good mental health. Through the participants' personal narratives, the study examines how these young individuals navigate their intersecting identities during a crucial period of their lives. It sheds light on their relationships with key identity themes such as ethnic and religious identity, belonging, and queer identity, as well as how these dynamics influence their mental health and capacity to seek support.

The findings underscore the importance of identification and visibility, understanding and recognition, and social support and community in shaping the identity development of minority ethnic queer youth. The results point to an urgent need for greater awareness, education, and training for social work and mental health professionals, equipping them to provide culturally sensitive and identity-affirming care for minority ethnic queer individuals and other marginalized minorities.

(57) Navigating Healthcare as 2SLGBTQIA+ Individuals in Estrie: Stress, Resilience, and the Need for Inclusive Practices

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Introduction, Aim & Objectives:

This communication aims to present the preliminary findings of a qualitative study exploring the healthcare and social service experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals in the Estrie region of Quebec, Canada. Using minority stress theory, the study aimed to contextualise the experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ people in relation to the services, focusing on (1) exploring the minority stress and resilience factors encountered, and (2) Identifying the ecological systems involved.

Methods:

The study draws on qualitative data from a larger survey on the well-being and needs of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals in Quebec. Four online focus groups were conducted in spring 2022 with 19 participants living in Estrie. The interviews were transcribed anonymously and analyzed thematically in NVivo using a deductive approach.

Findings/Outcomes:

Participants reported stressors at all ecological levels, with external barriers, such as systemic non-recognition and discrimination, especially prominent in the exosystem, where services are situated. These stressors often became internalized, further impacting well-being. In contrast, resilience relied largely on individuals and their immediate social circles, with participants citing personal pride and occasional community support. The lack of systemic or institutional resilience factors highlights the uneven burden placed on individuals to mitigate minority stress, emphasizing the need for broader systemic support.

Discussion/Conclusion:

The findings emphasize that resilience is not solely an individual process but is influenced by ecological systems, including supportive relationships, inclusive policies, and accessible services. Structural barriers within healthcare systems contribute to minority stress, underscoring the need for systemic change to foster resilience.

Implications for Practice:

The findings have significant implications for social work practice, particularly in promoting inclusive and engaged interventions for 2SLGBTQIA+ populations. Practitioners are encouraged to advocate for systemic changes, ensure that services are affirming and accessible, and foster environments where individuals are supported in navigating healthcare systems.

(58) Writing Your Own Story

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Aim & Objectives:

This study explores what purpose sharing and reading queer stories online hold for LGBTQ+ youth in a Swedish setting on the world wide web. These queer stories are both fanfiction and slash fiction, i.e., where famous characters intersect in a new story, as well as original works by LGBTQ+ youth.

Methods:

Participant observation, through a digital ethnographic approach, and 12 semi-structured interviews as well as 40 user-generated novels, for and by LGBTQ+ youth, was used as material. A thematic analysis provided themes that were analysed through the Master narrative framework, the concept of Queer futurism and Critical fabulation as well as concepts of Minority joy.

Findings:

Four themes describe purposes for writing and reading user-generated short stories. Futurism, as a way to live your identity and future body online. Filling gaps in history, visualising queer history through fabulation for representation. Educative stories and elements, as an act of solidarity through providing tools for thriving and surviving in LGBTQ+. Erotica and romance, as a way to compensate a lack of representation and share minority joy.

Conclusion:

Findings suggest how engaging in queer short stories online act as an alternative narrative where the internalised master narrative is questioned, while creating your own story strengthens the personal narrative and reduces internalized shame. Queer online short stories seem to provide representation, information, history, activism, and hope for the future.

Implication(s) for Practice:

This research contributes to progressing perspectives on information creation and queer individuals' information practices. The online fictional worlds are important spaces for both identity development and well-being, a safe space that should be considered when discussing restraints on internet access. It underlines the need to be represented in your identity and carries implications for queer stories to be told to a further extent in the physical world.

(59) Intersectional Care and Belonging: Navigating Structural Inequalities and Relational Resilience among Rainbow Migrants

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Aim & Objectives:

This paper explores the intersectional experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse LGBTQIA+ migrants (Rainbow Migrants) navigating systems of care, belonging, and identity in host countries. It examines how intersecting oppressions—such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, migration status, and cultural heritage—shape access to health services and social support. The objective is to critique dominant Western paradigms of queer migration and propose inclusive, intersectional approaches to social work and allied health practices.

Methods:

Drawing on findings from the Rainbow Migrants Project in Western Australia, this study employs an intersectional framework to analyse qualitative data from participatory action research, co-designed workshops, and in-depth interviews with 65 Rainbow Migrants. These methods emphasise community-led approaches, centring participants' lived experiences to uncover structural inequities and resilience strategies.

Findings/Outcomes:

The research highlights the compounded vulnerabilities Rainbow Migrants face, including exclusion from ethnic communities, mainstream society, and LGBTQIA+ spaces due to cultural misrecognition and systemic discrimination. Chosen families, transnational networks, and community-led initiatives emerge as critical sources of resilience and relational care. These networks provide emotional, social, and material support, compensating for gaps in institutional systems and challenging traditional, individualistic care frameworks.

Discussion/Conclusion:

The findings underscore the need for inclusive policies and practices in social work and health professions that affirm diverse identities and address intersectional oppressions. By reimagining care systems to prioritise equity, cultural competence, and community-driven solutions, this research advocates for integrating relational care frameworks into migration and health services.

Implication(s) for Practice:

This research highlights implications for education and training in social work, health, and allied professions. It calls for intersectional competency training, recognition of chosen families, and policies supporting culturally inclusive care to foster dignity, belonging, and well-being for Rainbow Migrants while addressing systemic barriers.

(60) Kotawêw Project: Exploring the Role of Doulas in HIV Care for Indigenous Women and Two-Spirit People in Canada

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Introduction and Aim:

While the traditional roles of doulas in birth and death are well-documented, their potential in HIV and Sexually Transmitted and Blood Borne Infections (STBBI) care remains underexplored. The Kotawêw: HIV/STBBI Doula study examined how Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) doulas contribute to HIV and sexual health care for Indigenous women and Two-Spirit people in Manitoba, Canada.

Methods:

Guided by community-based participatory research and Indigenous Storywork, the project engaged an Indigenous Elder, knowledge holders, and a community guiding circle. Stories were collected from people living with HIV/STBBI (n = 21), relatives of people living with HIV/STBBI (n = 7), Knowledge Holders/Elders (n = 4), and service providers (n = 8) recruited through organizations, social media, and peers. Stories were thematically analyzed.

Findings:

Key themes emerged: (1) Relational trauma-informed care, building trust and sustaining long-term relationships; (2) Integrating Indigenous traditions, cultural practices and holistic healing into HIV care; (3) Practical support and harm reduction, including system navigation and access to resources; (4) Emotional support and advocacy; and (5) Addressing stigma and colonial violence. Knowledge holders underscored cultural humility and spirituality, while relatives highlighted secondary stigma and emotional labor. Service providers noted systemic challenges and the importance of culturally safe, non-judgmental care.

Discussion:

This research highlights the critical role of doulas in providing culturally safe, holistic, and trauma-informed care in the context of HIV and sexual health. Social workers and health professionals will need this knowledge to better address the unique needs of Indigenous women and Two-Spirit people living with or at risk of HIV/STBBIs.

Implications for Practice:

The findings highlight practice implications on how HIV/STBBI doulas can be an integral component of health and social care teams and care continuum for Indigenous women and Two-Spirit people living with or at risk of HIV/STBBI.

(61) A Steep Learning Curve: Evaluation of Palliative Care eLearning Co-designed with LGBTIQ+ People in Australia

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LGBTIQ+ people are vulnerable to discrimination, poorer health and wellbeing outcomes and having their wishes disregarded in hospice and palliative care settings. A lack of service provider knowledge and awareness of LGBTIQ+ people's preferences can impede access to available resources. Failing to achieve a person's end-of-life wishes, such as dying at home, can also have long-term negative consequences for loved ones. Improved palliative care for LGBTIQ+ communities may be achieved through training and education programs, particularly those that are developed in consultation with community members. While co-design is increasingly being used to address the needs of minoritised communities, little is known about co-design processes to improve palliative care with LGBTIQ+ communities.

Aim & Objectives:

The project sought to understand the processes associated with co-designing eLearning to improve palliative care providers' awareness of the issues and needs of LGBTIQ+ people.

Methods:

As part of a larger national palliative care project evaluation, this process evaluation used two rounds of qualitative semi-structured interviews (n = 11) with co-designers (n = 8) from 2022 to 2023 to explore their expectations and experiences of the co-design process.

Findings/outcomes:

Thematic analysis identified three themes: the value of diverse co-designers committing to shared goals, the role of skilled facilitation in creating a safe space for LGBTIQ+ people to share their knowledge and experiences, and the substantial work required outside of co-design meetings to complete the intervention design.

Discussion/Conclusion:

Co-design can be an effective method for engaging diverse LGBTQ+ people with lived and professional experience of palliative care. The presentation will highlight conditions that constrained co-design and the importance of specialist facilitation and organisational support to manage these conditions within time and funding limitations.

Implications for practice:

Limitations to co-design best practices can be mitigated by transparent communication, effective and inclusive facilitation and developing organisational co-design capability.

(65) Queer Blindfolding Experienced by Queer Refugees in Finland; Case Studies on Social Work's "Difference Blindness" in Encounters with Queer Clients

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Introduction/Aim:

Queer Blindfolding describes a discursive position that results in disappearing of queer identities, as well as minimization and/or denial of the oppression experienced by LGBTQ+ people.

In my Doctoral Research, I am examining queer refugees navigating official systems, communities and relationships in Finland.

The aim of the study is to create further understanding to structural changes needed in the Finnish official systems and communities to create safer reception and integration of queer refugees.

Methods:

The still on-going research is based on the case studies of 8 LGBTQ+ refugees, who are either seeking for asylum in Finland or have arrived in Finland as asylum seekers but stayed in Finland by through other means.

Informants are interviewed every 3-4 months during a period of 18 months during years 2024-2026. Informants have diverse experiences of Finnish Social Work as they have encountered Social Work in reception centers, municipal services, NGOs and services for undocumented migrants. Institutional ethnography is utilized as an analysis tool.

Outcomes:

Informants have experienced multiple forms of queer blindfolding in Finland both in arenas of Social Work and in other services such as hospitals, housing and Immigration services. Due to queer blindfolding, many informants have been denied services needed by them, have been assigned to unsafe housing and have been refused protection integral to them.

Conclusion:

Queer Refugees have been able to detect several services and situations, in which they would have needed their queer identities, and impacts of those identities recognized in order for them to stay safe and have their basic needs met.

Implications for Practice:

In the presentation, several cases with recommendations for future Social Work Practice will be presented with an emphasis on the opinions of queer refugees themselves. Their lived experiences make powerful testimonies for the need of re-evaluating practices of Finnish Social Work.

(66) Exploring Emancipatory Language Practices for Reproductive Justice

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In Quebec province (Canada), the women's health movement has the best-established and best-funded institutions when compared with the two other movements advocating for sexual and reproductive rights: the LGBTQ+ movement and the Reproductive justice movement. However, the women's health movement is reluctant to broaden its analyses and working methods to consider the analyses and claims of the two other movements.

Given the upmost important place of language in structuring and expressing the world, I develop the notion of emancipatory language practices to designate practices involving language (written, oral or signed) and contributing to collective emancipation. Through the observation of sexual and reproductive advocacy groups belonging to three movements (women's health movement, LGBTQ+ movement, reproductive justice movement), I characterize, distinguish and compare the emancipatory language practices they put into practice and into action. I seek to identify emancipatory language practices that could be integrated in movements that do not use them yet.

The aim is to support a better integration of oppressions linked to sexual identity, sexual orientations and ethno-racial belonging in movements for sexual and reproductive advocacy. Reproductive justice has distinguished itself from the two other movements by its multilingual practices. How is multilingualism mobilized by the groups that use it? How could it be integrated by other organizations?

(67) Origins and Fundamental Issues of the Reproductive Justice Movement

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In 1994, as President Clinton was announcing his health care system reform, 12 sexual and reproductive rights activists published a statement entitled: « Black Women on Universal Health Care Reform » (Washington Post, April 16, 1994). These African American women, most of whom work within the pro-choice movement in the US, use the term Reproductive justice for the first time. They give their support to a universal coverage of abortion services, while arguing for the importance of an inclusive and universal health care system. The authors sign as a collective under the name “Women of African Descent for Reproductive Justice” and are followed by 836 signatories, who simply identify themselves as black women. In retrospect, this event will be held as the launching of the Reproductive Justice movement. This movement criticize the American pro-choice movement and its individualistic framing of the notion of “choice” that doesn’t consider social determinants of health nor their impacts on women’s ability to make real choices. While the American pro-choice movement bases its argument solely on individual choices and deals only with abortion rights, the Reproductive Justice movement takes a social and collective stand to take into account a set of intersecting oppressions. The African American women behind the Reproductive Justice movement know that for many of their sisters, the problem is not access to abortion, but rather the opportunity of carrying and keeping a child they wish to have. What’s more, beyond the perinatal period, they demand the right to raise the children they have in decent living conditions, without having them taken away by public assistance or killed by police. A brief overview of the theoretical foundations of the movement, its fields of action (through examples from the United States, Canada and France) and its internal debate will help to further characterize it.

(68) LGBTQTeeHee: Feasibility and Acceptability of a Stand-up Comedy-based Intervention for Mental Well-being and Resilience of LGBTQ+ Individuals

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Aim & Objectives:

The mental well-being and resilience of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) individuals have garnered significant attention in health research, particularly in addressing the unique minority stressors they disproportionately face. Interventions aimed at bolstering resilience in these communities are increasingly important. Comedy, as a multifaceted and accessible art form, offers a platform for addressing complex social issues. LGBTQTeeHee is a novel stand-up comedy intervention grounded in a strengths-based mental resilience model, designed to empower participants to utilise comedy, storytelling, and performance as tools for enhancing mental well-being and building resilience.

Methods:

Nine participants (aged 24–63, M = 40.44, SD = 14.33) took part in a complimentary 10-week comedy course, comprising three-hour weekly sessions, culminating in a five-minute solo stand-up routine. Participants included individuals identifying as lesbian (n = 3), gay (n = 1), bisexual (n = 4), and queer (n = 1), with gender identities comprising cisgender (n = 4) and trans and/or non-binary (n = 5). Data on the intervention's acceptability and feasibility were collected through follow-up focus groups (n = 1) and semi-structured interviews (n = 5). Thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data.

Findings/Outcomes:

All participants found the use of stand-up comedy an acceptable way to build community and bolster mental well-being and resilience. The findings are presented under three themes: (1) Laughter as Liberation; (2) Safe spaces for LGBTQ+ individuals; (3) From Performance to Empowerment.

Implication(s) for Practice:

As a novel intervention, LGBTQTeeHee demonstrates significant potential in enhancing the mental health and well-being of a marginalised community, offering an alternative to traditional therapeutic approaches. By exploring innovative combinations of community-building and participant empowerment, future efforts should focus on scaling up the intervention and assessing its long-term impact on mental well-being, resilience, and its capacity to buffer against minority stressors.

(69) Insurance Barriers to Gender-Affirming Health Care

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Introduction:

Transgender and non-binary (TNB) individuals face disproportionate health disparities due to systemic barriers to gender-affirming care. These barriers contribute to adverse outcomes such as psychological distress and unmet medical needs for TNB populations. This presentation explores insurance-related barriers to gender-affirming care among TNB individuals in California, USA.

Aim & Objectives:

The aim of this presentation is to discuss results of a study exploring insurance challenges faced by TNB individuals in Southern California. The aims are to discuss insurance challenges reported by TNB individuals and propose strategies for improving access to gender-affirming care.

Methods:

The study utilized a mixed-method survey to explore participants' health insurance barriers and how these barriers impeded gender-affirming care. Participants included a convenience sample of 96 clients ages 18+ from four organizations across Southern California serving TNB clients.

Findings:

Findings revealed extensive insurance barriers, including financial constraints, lack of providers, inadequate benefits information, and complex appeals processes. Additionally, over 35% of participants faced denials for medically necessary care, while 59% experienced delays. Many participants relied on alternative financial support systems to access essential gender-affirming treatments. Findings suggested that systemic inequities via insurance coverage significantly impacted the TNB individuals' health and well-being.

Discussion:

This study underscores the urgent need for policy reform, improved education, and better collaboration between insurance providers and healthcare organizations to ensure equitable access to gender-affirming care for all TNB individuals. Efforts should be directed towards reducing financial burdens and structural barriers, streamlining appeals processes, and addressing informational gaps that hinder access to vital healthcare services.

Implications:

Social workers and healthcare advocates are uniquely positioned to drive change through policy advocacy, provider training, and direct support for TNB individuals navigating insurance systems. This presentation will highlight actionable strategies to reduce barriers and promote equitable healthcare access.

(70) Sexual Education for Youth in Precarious Situations: Insights and Implications for Group Work in Juvenile Justice

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This paper integrates findings from a qualitative study and extensive practical experience in sex education within the juvenile justice system to examine the sociosexual challenges of youth in precarious situations. Based on 16 interviews with adolescents from juvenile detention centers, probation services, and street contexts in Berlin-Brandenburg, the study reveals patterns of risky sexual behavior, limited access to sexual health resources, and the persistence of gendered double standards shaped by structural inequalities and marginalized living conditions.

The analysis draws on theoretical frameworks by Pierre Bourdieu, Ira Reiss, and Gayle Rubin, employing the documentary method and grounded theory to provide a nuanced understanding of sexual socialization and identity formation in these contexts. The findings emphasize the transformative potential of sexual education in addressing the unique needs of youth in juvenile justice settings.

Building on years of professional experience, the paper proposes a practical framework for delivering sex education in "involuntary settings." Key recommendations include fostering trust, utilizing participatory and culturally sensitive methods, and implementing holistic, resource-oriented curricula that promote empowerment, sexual self-determination, and well-being while respecting the dignity of participants. By avoiding the reproduction of social control mechanisms, this approach aligns with ethical and human rights standards.

This contribution aims to guide social workers, educators, and policymakers in developing effective strategies to integrate sexual education into rehabilitative efforts, ultimately fostering greater social inclusion and resilience among marginalized youth.

(71) Transgender and Gender Diverse Persons' Sexual Health: Training Gaps and Desires Among Primary Care Providers Through a Lens of Gender Affirmation and Health Equity

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Aims & Objectives:

Transgender and gender diverse (TGD) people experience sexual health inequities driven by anti-trans stigma, including higher rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Yet, TGD people face STI testing barriers, most notably, low access to knowledgeable and affirming primary care providers (PCPs). To inform future training, we sought to understand the practices, comfort, and knowledge gaps of PCPs in performing gender-affirming STI testing among TGD persons.

Methods:

We conducted a mixed-methods study using quantitative surveys (n=50) and qualitative interviews (n=8) with PCPs (2024/2025). The survey assessed sociodemographics, TGD-related training/practice, and knowledge of TGD care and STI testing guidelines. Interviews explored how PCPs apply STI testing guidelines and navigate sexual history taking/physical exam with TGD persons. Quantitative analysis included bivariable and multivariable regression. Qualitative analysis involved open inductive coding.

Findings/Outcomes:

Among PCPs (92% physician, 6% nurse practitioner, 2% physician assistant), 46% had ≤5 hours of TGD health training. Only 48% were aware of TGD care guidelines. In multivariable regression analysis, having 6+ hours of training in TGD health ($b=.96$, $p<.01$) and serving more TGD patients ($b=.81$, $p<.01$) were significantly associated with self-reported competence to clinically assess TGD persons. Qualitative findings highlighted how gendered assumptions influenced testing recommendations (e.g. only using inclusive language with known or assumed TGD persons) and how limited access to TGD-inclusive STI screening guidelines and training impeded perceived competency, particularly with HPV-related anal cancer screening.

Discussion/Conclusion:

Provider training and experience working with TGD patients are significantly associated with self-reported competence in providing care to this population. Findings underscore the need for training to improve equitable TGD access to STI screening.

Implications for Practice:

Since sexual health is a human right, social workers must be committed to better connecting with affirming providers for their clients, while also supporting PCPs in accessing TGD-related training.

(74) Queer Caring – Irish Family Carers and Their Service Experiences

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In this presentation I highlight the core findings of a small-scale targeted survey of family carers in Ireland who identify as LGBTQ+. This study is the first of its kind in an Irish context.

Aim & Objectives:

The aim of this part of my study was to gain a base understanding of the experiences of LGBTQ+ family carers in Ireland, and to identify particular issues for further examination.

Methods:

I developed a survey whose questions included a mixture of qualitative and quantitative questions. 49 responses were collected over a period of 6 weeks. Responses were organised, coded and analysed.

Findings/Outcomes:

- Ireland's LGBTQ+ family carers generally have positive experiences with health & social care (HSC) professionals, including social workers.
- Many respondents identify as bisexual, with a high proportion of these are in seemingly heterosexual relationships
- Many respondents were aware of supports they could access in the LGBTQ+ and family community, yet have not accessed these.

Discussion/Conclusion:

Queer family carers in Ireland have generally positive experiences with health & social care professionals, contrary to most other similar international studies. Why is this? Bisexual members of the community are often overlooked, and a large proportion of these respondents to my survey were caring for their children with disabilities in 'heterosexual' relationships, thereby erasing them from the more visible LGBTQ+ community and potential supports. What can we, as HSC professionals, learn from this to implement across international contexts?

Implication(s) for Practice:

HSC professionals need to be aware of the assumptions we make every day, perhaps unknowingly erasing potential sources of support. Understanding why Irish LGBTQ+ family carers have more positive experiences and attitudes towards social workers and other HSC professionals can help develop better experiences for those using our services.

(75) Effects of fitspiration content on body image and mental health among sexual minority individuals

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Introduction:

Fitspiration, a form of social media content aimed at inspiring individuals to lead healthy lifestyles, has gained significant popularity on Instagram. However, despite its focus on fitness, much of this content objectifies the body by emphasizing appearance over functional capacity.

Aim & Objectives:

This study investigates the effects of consuming fitspiration content on Instagram on body image and mental health among sexual minority individuals, examining the role of gender and sexual orientation in shaping these experiences.

Methods:

A total of 551 sexual minority individuals participated in an online survey study that explored Instagram usage, fitspiration content consumption, body image, and mental health.

Findings:

The results indicated that viewing fitspiration content, rather than general Instagram use, was positively associated with body surveillance and body shame. The relationship between fitspiration content consumption and depression symptoms was mediated by body surveillance and body shame. Notably, the mediation effect was significant among gay men, plurisexual men, and plurisexual women, but not among lesbian women.

Discussion:

This study reveals the negative impact of fitspiration content on body image and mental health. Similar to heterosexual women, certain subgroups of sexual minority individuals, including gay men and plurisexual men and women, are vulnerable to the objectifying male gaze. This susceptibility may lead to increased self-objectification and a higher likelihood of experiencing depression symptoms.

Implications for Practice:

Given the considerable harm associated with viewing fitspiration content, social workers should provide targeted support to sexual minority clients experiencing body image issues. They should educate clients about the impact of fitspiration and empower them to critically engage with social media. Additionally, content creators and influencers on Instagram should be mindful of the narrow appearance standards they perpetuate, as they play a crucial role in addressing harmful narratives surrounding body image.

(76) Negotiating Space: How Young People Understand Non-Consensual and Unwanted Sexual Encounters

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Aims and Objectives:

Sexual violence is a common occurrence among young people, specifically those of marginalized racial and sexual identities. Despite its pervasiveness, the ways young people define and understand their experiences, in their own words, is understudied. The aim of the present study is to explore how young people across three countries (Canada, USA, and Australia), specifically those who identify as people of color and/or queer, understand their experiences of unwanted sexual encounters.

Methods:

Authors engaged in secondary thematic analysis of primary data from 4theRecord, an interdisciplinary and multinational research project which inquired about the risk-taking experiences of queer and/or racialized young women and non-binary young people (ages 16 – 21) during the COVID-19 pandemic. Ten interviews of young people from Toronto, New York City, and Melbourne mentioned sexual violence and/or unwanted sexual experiences. These interview transcripts were analyzed via Braun and Clarke's approach to thematic analysis.

Findings:

Three primary themes were allocated from the data, which found that participants blame their experiences with sexual violence on having a lack of boundaries, engaging in various forms of self-blame, and that participants do not name their experiences as sexual violence. Comprehensively, findings suggest that participants avoid labeling their experiences as instances of violence by stating that they did not experience sexual violence or bypassing defining their experiences. Additionally, it was found that participants undertook responsibility for experiencing sexual violence, stating in that their own behaviors, or lack thereof, allowed their assaults to occur.

Implications:

The authors propose that practice areas implement curriculum to dismantle rape culture, such as addressing concepts like rape acknowledgement, victim-blaming, and the lack of a consistent definition of sexual violence. While it was found that survivors blame themselves, practice efforts should focus on addressing the interpersonal, legal, and political structures that enable self-blame among participants.

(77) Co-creating Rainbow-Inclusive Aged Care: Participatory Research with Older LGBTQ+ People and Residential Aged Care Providers in Australia

Mark Hughes¹, Meaghan Vosz¹, Andrea Waling², Limin Mao³, Kristiana Ludlow⁴, Lukasz Krzyzowski⁵, Craig Sinclair³, Ruth Hubbard⁴, Benignus Logan⁴

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Older LGBTQ+ people fear discrimination, neglect and abuse in older age as they need increasing support to maintain their health and wellbeing. There is a concern that older LGBTQ+ people put off or avoid the transition to residential aged care services until their health and wellbeing have worsened significantly. LGBTQ+ inclusive residential aged care is constrained by a lack of staff awareness, organisational cis- and hetero-normativity, ageism within LGBTQ+ communities, and inadequate resourcing impacting on person-centred care. While training programs exist, there is little evidence that they result in improved quality of care and culture change within residential aged care services.

The Rainbow-Inclusive Aged Care project is funded from 2024-2028 in Australia to co-create an inclusive model of care for all gender and sexually diverse people living, working in, and visiting residential aged care homes. This presentation will discuss the participatory, appreciative inquiry methodology we are using to co-create a model of 'rainbow-inclusive' residential aged care with older LGBTQ+ people and care providers, including co-research, communities of practice, and co-design of resources to guide model implementation and evaluation. LGBTQ+ older people's lived and living experiences are supporting the engagement of residents, staff and visitors to residential aged care. The methodology has begun to generate new insights into residential care with practitioners/providers willing to move beyond 'we don't have any of them here' to critically reflect on the practices that enable safety, inclusion and pride.

(78) Social Work Practice with Transgender and Gender Diverse Adults: A Scoping Review

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Gender affirming practices are an emergent area of statutory social work practice and are receiving increasing attention in academic journals and practice forums internationally. This scoping review seeks to examine and analyse existing work in this area – how social workers became involved in transgender and gender diverse adults' lives, and the form and function of these interactions.

A comprehensive search of relevant databases (ASSIA, SCOPUS, and PSYCINFO) was conducted with more than 3,000 results and approximately 25 papers included in the final review. Supplementary searches for grey literature were also conducted and included reports and historical correspondence from third sector organisations, information from LGBTQ+ archives, government white papers and policy documents, and other literature not found in the databases. The findings indicate that social workers have played an important role in transgender lives historically, and earlier than has previously been understood. Of particular interest was work conducted pre-2000, and work from Margaret Branch (Psychiatric Social Worker, Guy's Hospital), which was presented at the First International Symposium on Gender Identity in London in 1969.

This paper will outline some of the key theories and findings concerning social work and transgender adults, and will also consider implications for practice and future research. While there is a broad understanding that the transgender and gender diverse population is increasing and is at an escalating risk of intersectional discrimination, harassment, and oppression, social work with this population remains a niche area of practice and practitioner competence and confidence remain a concern. The scoping review will provide evidence of the lived experiences of transgender and gender diverse people in social work practice, and raise questions about the extent to which frontline practitioners working with this client group are engaging with service users' experiences.

Funding for this project comes from the NIHR ARC-GM's Pre-Doctoral Fellowship.

(79) Migration as a Gender and Sexual Revolution: Arabic-Speaking Queer Community Arts in the EU Diaspora

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In many Arabic-speaking countries, such as Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, womxn and people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, expressions, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) face severe intersectional discrimination and violence, prompting them to seek refuge abroad, particularly in the EU. Mainstream research often confines asylum-seeking womxn and SOGIESC people to narratives of victimhood. However, the Arabic-speaking diaspora of these groups in the EU plays a crucial role in sustaining sexual and gender-diverse freedoms through activism and community arts, as a form of political social work—a role that is frequently overlooked or undocumented. Navigating between homonationalism and anti-gender movements, they uphold sexual freedom and democratic values in the EU while continuing their advocacy for sexual and gender-diverse liberation in the countries they left. Arabic-speaking queer community artists in the EU maintain a non-binary existence that challenges polarization by defying binary narratives within homonationalism.

The author of this case study is a self-identified queer feminist. She is a holder of Jordanian citizenship and a resident of Slovenia. As a community artist and activist, she conducted focus groups over one year as action research, culminating in the creation of two queer Arabic-speaking community art projects: "Al Ghawazi and Khawalat" and "NOT your Scheherazade and Om Badawi." This research brought together queer community artists and activists from Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, now living in Slovenia and the Netherlands.

The study defines Arabic-speaking queer community arts and activism as a form of political social work. It provides concrete examples of migration as a sexual and gender-diverse revolution. By analyzing these arts and activism in the diaspora, the study contributes to migration research through self-agency and post-rational feminist approaches. The findings demonstrate that Arabic-speaking queer community arts serve as a form of political social work, empowering people to transcend geographical binary limitations inherent in homonationalism.

(82) Fertility Preservation for Trans and Non-Binary Youth: a Review of the Literature

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The question of fertility preservation arises at a pivotal moment in the development of young trans and non-binary people, since this decision has an influence on their transition process and future parenthood opportunities.

The aim of this paper is to review the experiences of young trans people and their parents regarding fertility preservation, in order to identify the issues involved (personal, relational, family and structural) and the elements that influence the process.

A literature review was carried out using various databases, bringing together 33 empirical studies published between 2015 and 2024, with samples made up of trans and non-binary young people aged 30 and under or their parents.

The decision whether or not to preserve fertility is influenced by access to information, but the information transmitted and its sources often prove heterogeneous. Young people report a need for access to user-friendly information on the subject. Several other factors affect young people's decisions, such as the costs and transition times associated with this procedure, the presence of dysphoria, age, the sex assigned at birth, the desire for parenthood, the importance given to the biological link, the expectations of young people's families and their point of view on adoption. In conclusion, some avenues of action are explored to improve support for young people in their decision-making process.

(83) How Babies Are Made? Children's Books About Family Diversity and Conception by Sperm Donation

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When asked by their child “How do you make babies?”, parents who have used sperm donation are faced with the choice of whether or not to reveal the circumstances surrounding their child's conception. Various tools can be used to facilitate family dialogue. Children's books are recognized as being particularly popular with parents, as they fit in with the ritual of story time and help explain assisted reproduction in words and images that are accessible to children.

As part of a cross-disciplinary approach, a research collective was set up to identify children's books on sperm donation, analyze their content and validate their reception by concerned parents. The collective was composed of six mothers who had undergone sperm donation, a psychologist, three researchers in social work and psychology, and a writer.

An analysis of 32 children's books published in French and English since 2010 was carried out. Among other things, it looked at the narrative, the choice of characters, the words used to describe the donor and his donation, and the illustrations used to depict family realities. Next, two focus groups were held with mothers who had undergone sperm donation, to identify the elements of the albums on which there was consensus, as well as those on which there were reservations or criticisms.

(84) 'They Gave Birth to Us and Tell Us What Is Right and Wrong': Intersectional Influences on Ghanaian Adolescents' Sexual Health Attitudes

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Aim & Objectives:

This study explored how Ghanaian adolescents develop and navigate sexual health attitudes and gender role perceptions regarding how they absorb or reject norms conveyed through parents, peers, and societal structures and systems.

Methods:

A secondary qualitative analysis study was conducted using data collected in 2020 through arts-based journey mapping and informal group discussions with 13 Ghanaian adolescents aged 16 to 22. An intersectional framework combining Social Learning Theory and Gender Schema Theory was applied to a deductive thematic analysis, providing the theoretical basis for identifying how behaviours and attitudes were learned and internalised. A critical lens was also applied to locate themes within historical and systemic developments, enabling the exploration of individual and structural influences on adolescents' experiences.

Findings/Outcomes:

Three key themes were established: fear-based parental guidance reinforcing restrictive norms, particularly for young women; peer relationships that supported and challenged traditional gendered expectations; and sexual experiences that reflected a tension between conforming to and resisting colonial and patriarchal narratives. The analysis connected individual behaviours to systemic influences, showing how adolescents negotiate their identities and autonomy within intersecting systems of power and socialisation.

Discussion/Conclusion:

Although data were collected in 2020, the findings remain relevant as they highlight enduring cultural and societal influences that continue to shape sexual health education and gender norms in Ghana. The evidence of fear-driven parental guidance and unequal gender expectations highlights the need for interventions that address these barriers. At the same time, adolescents' acts of resistance suggest opportunities for fostering open dialogue and more equitable approaches to sexual health and relationships.

Implications For Practice:

Social workers and policymakers can develop community-based programs that train parents to adopt open, non-judgmental communication strategies and establish peer-led support groups to counteract fear-driven narratives and promote equitable gender norms.

(85) Resistance and Reform: The Role of Anti-Gender Mobilization in Slovenia's Path to Marriage Equality

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In 2022, Slovenia became the first post-socialist country to legalize marriage equality and adoption rights for same-sex couples. This historic milestone, while appearing sudden, was the result of 33 years of persistent advocacy, involving numerous legislative attempts, referendums, and court rulings. However, to fully grasp this milestone, it is crucial to understand not just its legal aspects but also the broader social context, particularly the evolving attitudes toward homosexuality and the rise of the anti-gender movement.

This paper explores the unexpected role of anti-gender mobilizations, which, despite opposing LGBT rights, paradoxically contributed to advancing equality. Through an analysis of legal decisions, public campaigns, and activist strategies, the paper shows how the anti-gender movement reshaped public discourse, mobilized progressive actors, and fostered alliances between diverse stakeholders. Opposition efforts, including referendums and campaigns, unintentionally brought visibility to LGBT rights and created a platform for broader societal debates on sexual citizenship.

Findings indicate that this resistance acted as a catalyst, forcing the LGBT movement to adopt more effective strategies, build coalitions, and amplify its public presence. Public attitudes shifted significantly during this period, with increased acceptance of same-sex relationships and greater support for legal and social equality.

By examining Slovenia's journey to marriage equality, this paper highlights how opposition can unintentionally drive progress. The case provides insights into the complex interplay between activism, resistance, and social change, showing how struggles for equality can emerge stronger in the face of resistance.

(86) Hidden in Plain Sight: The Impact of Rainbow-Blind Social Work on Ageing LGBTQ+ Adults

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This presentation presents findings from the LGBTQ+ Older Adult Social Care Assessment (LOASCA) study. The aim of the study was to explore how social care workers engage with and have conversations about sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) when undertaking care assessments with older (60+) adults. The presentation sheds light on findings that underscore the absence of representation and discourse around older LGBTQ+ people in policy considerations and staff discussions.

The project employed a workforce survey across three local authorities in the West Midlands, 28 interviews with social care practitioners from these local authorities, 13 interviews with older LGBTQ+ service users, and an analysis of policy documents and anonymised case files.

The findings revealed a lack of clear mechanisms for collecting data on SOGI, hindering efforts to understand and address the unique needs of LGBTQ+ older adults in social care settings. Representing the voices of social care professionals, our study demonstrates a clear demand for access to knowledge concerning LGBTQ+ issues and their application in daily practice. The lack of knowledge not only hinders the delivery of inclusive care and support but also perpetuates a cycle of invisibility for LGBTQ+ individuals in the aging population, reinforcing the implications of so-called 'rainbow-blind practice' in social care settings.

The presentation emphasises a need for developing comprehensive strategies that address these gaps, fostering an environment where LGBTQ+ older adults are not only recognized but actively included in the discourse surrounding social care policy and practice. Some of the strategies include mandatory LGBTQ+ training for all social care staff, ensuring that SOGI data is collected during the care assessment process, and developing a knowledge base of local and national support organisations for older LGBTQ+ adults.

(87) Supporting Victims of Anti-LGBTIQ+ Crimes: New Approaches to Restoration

Jose Antonio Langarita¹, Núria Fustier-García¹, Núria Sadurní-Balcells¹, Pilar Albertín Carbó¹

¹Universitat De Girona, Girona, Spain

Background:

The situation of LGBTIQ+ people in Spain has evolved significantly in recent decades. However, violence and discrimination persist. The EU LGBTIQ Survey indicates that 12% of LGBTIQ+ people in Spain have experienced physical or sexual violence in the past five years due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. Addressing hate crimes has become the principal strategy to combat these forms of violence through the penal code.

Aims and Objectives:

This study examines the experiences of victims and professionals working with anti-LGBTIQ hate crimes victims, aiming to assess victims' needs and the effectiveness of support services by identifying strengths and weaknesses.

Method:

Findings are drawn from the EU-funded ENACT project, which involved 18 interviews with professionals, 19 with victims, and a focus group with 7 professionals in Spain. Thematic content analysis was conducted, and the study received ethical approval.

Findings:

Victims' experiences vary widely, with significant emotional and physical impacts. Socioeconomic factors influence access to support services—those with stronger social and financial resources access services more easily. While victims trust social organisations, they have low confidence in the justice system and police, often reporting negative experiences. Neither victims nor professionals view judicial processes as restorative, though punitive approaches remain dominant.

Discussion/Conclusions:

A one-size-fits-all interpretation of victims' experiences hinders effective support strategies. While punitive measures fail to restore victims, restorative justice alternatives remain unconvincing due to entrenched punitive culture. However, the few implemented restorative practices have yielded positive outcomes. Thinking of restorative strategies that can address each situation based on the context and the victims' needs could be a good approach to building other forms of support, allowing also the perpetrators to repair the harm.

Implications for Practice:

Strengthening holistic support, specialised training, and inter-institutional coordination is crucial. Exploring reparative strategies beyond punitive models can better address victims' diverse needs.

(88) Has he been to the Vagina Museum? Unexpected impacts of involvement in research and education

Sally Lee¹

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This presentation recounts the sometimes-unexpected impacts for co-creators in research and education around sexual wellbeing.

The presentation discusses how sexual wellbeing is fundamental to general wellbeing and therefore should be part of holistic approaches to social work. It reflects on the experience of engaging in and delivering learning about sexual wellbeing which is a topic now embedded within the social work curriculum at a UK based university. The learning content, co-created and co-delivered by experts by experience and the presenter, supports social work students to understand that sexual wellbeing-informed-practice is an essential part of effective professional practice.

Insights into the empowering impact for learners, who gain new perspectives through the learning, as well as for the experts by experience are discussed drawing on analysis of feedback from multiple cohorts of student social workers who have undertaken the learning, and accounts from experts by experience (including a recording from an expert by experience who explains the title of the presentation). Ongoing, participatory research activities will also be discussed.

Implications for practice are highlighted, specifically the importance of social work practitioners having the skills and knowledge to support people with their sexual wellbeing, something that is too often overlooked or absent in social work education which then adds to the sexual disenfranchisement experienced by people. There are barriers to getting sexual wellbeing into social work education, but it is important due to national and global aims towards the advancement of holistic sexual wellness, particularly for marginalised groups such as people living with disabilities.

(89) Queer Community under Attack: Queer Liberation Theory as a Blueprint for Activism and Resistance

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Queers are under attack from a coordinated campaign to erase and undermine the community's progress towards social inclusion. Queer Liberation Theory (QLT) could provide a blueprint to resist, mobilize and build solidarity. This presentation will introduce participants to QLT as a structural and critical framework. An emerging QLT provides a framework to critically analyse the relationship between queerness and capitalism, and the implications for anti-capitalist movements. QLT seeks to reinvigorate the structural focus of the Gay/Queer liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s, with insights gained from Queer theory. Three QLT tenets have been identified: anti-assimilationism, solidarity across social movements, and the political economy of queerness. These tenants were discussed at the inaugural Queer Activist Symposium in May 2023. The goal was to: (1) Expand QLT as a means for the movement to progress beyond identity formation and return to its earlier, liberationist form, and, (2) Evaluate QLT's potential to rebuild solidarity and reawaken the dormant Queer movement based on its practical application. The symposium was a free 2-day event that provided meals and overnight lodging at a university campus in Ontario, Canada. The event featured presentations by activists representing different social justice movements, including Black Lives Matter (Toronto Chapter) and O:se Kenhionhata:tie (a local Indigenous community group). Participants, presenters, and organizers shared diverse perspectives on Queer history, the applicability of QLT, and considerations for future mobilization of the Queer community. Through conversations guided by QLT four new priorities emerged: access and diversity; decolonizing community and activism; crediting and centering marginalized voices, concepts and history; and practical applications for future generations. These priorities may empower social workers to uproot exclusion, discrimination, and stigma in community development and movement-building. In solidarity, social workers and the Queer community have the strength to resist oppressive forces.

(90) Researcher's reflexive positioning in Chemsex Research: How Self-Disclosure Shapes the Study of Sexuality in Social Work

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Introduction:

Qualitative scientific research on human sexuality faces several methodological challenges, including taboos and prejudices associated with certain sexual practices, as well as the discomfort and resistance that research participants may feel. These factors can hinder self-disclosure and create desirability biases, distorting the data. Therefore, it is important to question whether traditional qualitative research methods like one-on-one interviews, which sometimes emphasize a distance between the researcher and the participant, are truly suitable for investigating sexuality and intimacy.

Aim and objective:

Our objective is to document the importance of researcher positioning in social work research to facilitate access to participants' lived experiences regarding sexuality.

Methodology:

We draw on our experiences as student researchers in the PnP 55+ study, a community-based project documenting the life paths and substance use of men aged 55+ from diverse sexual and gender backgrounds who engage in chemsex (n=28). Using queer autoethnography and feminist epistemologies, we explore the role of researcher positioning in participants' self-disclosure, comparing it to intentional self-disclosure practices in social work.

Findings and discussion:

We document that positioning helps build trust with participants, enabling discussions on taboo and sensitive topics, particularly when the researcher holds an insider position within the group. These interviews also present greater diversity and depth in terms of information obtained. Conversely, we find that the lack of self-disclosure maintains participants in an "objective distance," which is counterproductive for addressing intimate topics related to sexuality and leads to participant disengagement. Finally, we discuss the (de)sexualization of researchers depending on their positionality in the study and the challenges this entails.

Implications for practice:

This presentation highlights the importance of researcher positioning in social work research in order to access the intimate realities of sexuality and demonstrates how the reflexive skills of researcher-practitioners facilitate the establishment of trust with participants.

(91) “Talking about race is hard and yet you do it... same with sex”: Strategies for Teaching Sex, Sexualities, and Sexual Health Content in Social Work

Jared Israel Best¹, Christine Marie Velez

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Introduction:

There is a notable lack of sex, sexualities, and sexual health content required in social work courses across the U.S. Ethical practice in diverse micro to macro contexts demands students engage with these topics in their social work education.

Aims/Objectives:

The aim of this project is to build on the work of previous scholars and better understand experiences of teaching sex, sexuality, and sexual health in social work.

Methods:

We conducted 24 semi-structured Zoom interviews with faculty across the U.S. and Canada. Our interview guide focused on pedagogical strategies, building learning communities, and teaching specific topics related to sexualities. Questions also addressed successes, challenges, and advice for faculty interested in teaching this content.

Findings:

The following three themes emerged: reflexivity in teaching and practice, learning prior to teaching, and integrating sexualities into existing courses. Participants share insights encouraging faculty to draw on existing pedagogical strategies and skills to strengthen the incorporation of sex, sexualities, and sexual health content into social work curricula.

Discussion:

Findings underscore that teaching sex, sexualities, and sexual health does not require unique skills, but rather demands greater familiarity and comfort with the material. Sociopolitical contexts, including geographical location and institutional factors, impact both willingness and opportunities to teach stigmatized topics in social work courses.

Implications for Practice:

These topics frequently arise in practice and it is the ethical obligation of social workers to facilitate discussions regarding sex, sexualities, and sexual health with service users. By addressing this content in social work curricula, students will be better prepared to confront stigma and facilitate affirming and supportive conversations in social work practice.

(92) Emotionality and Embodiment in Macro Social Work with Sex Workers

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Introduction and aim:

Due to sexual stigma, economic marginalization, repressive policies and intersecting social positions - such as being a person of colour, migrant, or part of a LGBTQ+ community - sex workers are frequently exposed to rights violations and social injustices. These challenge foundational principles of social work. Specialized social work services exist that support men, women and trans people who work in the sex industry. The author has 15+ years practitioner experience in this field in the Netherlands. In this research, the author analyses encounters between representatives of state systems and social workers working with and from within sex work communities.

Methods:

During ethnographic fieldwork at a Dutch NGO supporting sex workers, meetings were witnessed where social work practitioners would engage with policy officers from local and national governmental institutes and police departments. Participatory observation was enriched by interviews, both with social workers and government officials.

Findings:

The research shows how social workers - despite individual casework as their formal assignment and despite scarcity - invest ample time and energy in politicizing practices that aim to challenge structural barriers. It illustrates how these practitioners resist, rather than conform to, increasingly repressive sex work policies. In encounters with government officials, practitioners on one hand aim at igniting feelings of empathy and solidarity, while at the same time having to manage emotionality expressed by those officials that blur the lines between the private body and institutional body. Social work practitioners are found to navigate epistemic challenges through a performed presentation of their own bodies and emotions.

Conclusions and implications for practice:

The research unveils the force of private bodies and emotions of both social workers and state officials that unofficially entwine a sexually moralized collaborative governance work-in-progress. The learnings can strengthen social work practices for social justice with stigmatized communities.

(95) LGBTIQ+ and Homelessness in Germany - Queer Perspectives, Experiences and Needs

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According to international studies, LGBTIQ+ who are homeless or live in insecure housing are to be considered a particularly vulnerable group. Experiences of discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression of gender characteristics (SOGIESC) are reasons for homelessness and insecure housing as well as they can lead to an exacerbation of problems during homelessness. The target group of queer homeless people is hardly visible in social work concepts and social work science as well as in the perception of professionals.

This first nationwide study explores the perspective, experiences and needs of queer and homeless people in a wider range of ages in Germany. In a qualitative research approach 14 narrative interviews were conducted with people of different ages (19-67) who identify as queer or LGBTIQ+ and are homeless or have been homeless. The goal was to reconstruct their perspectives and experiences by analyzing their action orientations and thus the implicit meaning behind their actions.

The results clearly show how anti-queer discrimination in private spaces (e.g. family, neighbourhood) and public spaces increases the risk of becoming homeless. At the same time, homelessness increases the risk of becoming a victim of queer-hostile violence, particularly as a result of classist discrimination. An intersectional perspective is particularly revealing and interesting, as it highlights the interaction and entanglement of homelessness with racism, classism, anti-semitism and right-wing extremist violence.

Queer homeless people are in urgent need of safer spaces in order to survive that Social work must provide through suitable concepts and an intersectional perspective on discrimination.

(97) Sexuality of Residents of Montreal's Mental Health Residential Resources

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Introduction:

Healthcare providers (HCP) often exclude sexuality in mental health (MH) care due to lack of knowledge or discomfort which can hinder their integration into the community and to access full sexual citizenship.

Aim & Objectives:

The aim of this project is to explore the integration of sexuality in the social functioning of people residing in mental health housing (MHH) network, as part of a recovery process and contribute to their integration into the community.

Methods:

A scoping review method was used to search for relevant studies related to sexuality and concomitant disorders with people in mental health facilities (MHF). The search yielded 2,662 articles; after removing 2,460 duplicates, 202 remained. Following inclusion criteria screening (Published in the last 10 years, in French or English, addressing sexuality and concomitant disorders in MHF, and documenting evaluated interventions), 197 were excluded. Of the 5 remaining, 2 were eliminated after further review since they did not correspond to the research topic.

Findings/Outcomes:

The absence of policies on sexuality in mental health, at national, provincial and institutional levels, leaves HCP on their own, often feeling uncomfortable or untrained about sexuality which leads them to not address it. Excluding sexuality from the intervention results in a violation of their sexual rights.

Discussion/Conclusion:

Defending sexual rights is a priority to ensure full sexual citizenship for MHH residents and contribute to their integration into the community. To do so, HCP need to be aware of the issues and acquire the knowledge.

Implication(s) for Practice:

This project could contribute to the development of innovative intervention practices and lead to the creation of sexuality training courses for HCPs and social workers (SW), even to the creation of a SW specialised in sexuality.

(98) Prevention of violence against boys – Queer and Intersectional perspectives

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Due to disclosure processes in clerical and pedagogical institutions, sexualized violence against boys has become a public topic in different regions, e.g. in Australia, Great Britain, Germany and the Vatican. Boys as victims – and not as perpetrators – are a relatively new target group for social workers. Existing prevention programs usually address girls as victims or children alike and prevalent concepts of masculinity carry images of invulnerability and power.

In the practical research project “Boys' pedagogy and prevention of sexualised violence - potentials and challenges of masculinity-related youth work” (2018-2021, funded by the German Ministry for Education and Research) we examine how gender-reflective and queer-informed pedagogy can contribute to preventing sexualized violence against boys*. Conducting focus group interviews with eight different pedagogical teams, we used content analysis (Mayring 2005) in order to analyze intersections between sexual education, violence prevention, boys' work and queer pedagogy. Findings highlight the importance of critically engaging with gender and sexual norms, creating spaces for boys* to articulate experiences, and challenging hegemonic masculinity. A key distinction between explicit and implicit prevention emerged, emphasizing that queer-sensitive and intersectional approaches foster resilience and self-determination. The study also problematizes gender-segregated group settings, revealing paradoxes between empowerment, normalization, and deconstruction. Instead of fixed models, professionals must continuously reflect on tensions between inclusion and protection.

Our research underscores the need for skilled professionals who can create safer spaces and challenge gender norms to support boys* affected by violence. Through these insights, we seek to advance discourse on diversity, critique on heteronormativity and post-heteronormativity in educational and social work contexts.

As a practical outcome, we developed a short film on sexual violence against boys in a joint process with the pedagogical teams, which we would like to show. It can be used with kids as well as in trainings with professionals.

(99) If not now, then when? Social work educators, cis-supremacist legislation, and the question of professional obligation

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Aims & Objectives:

The U.S. is experiencing a wave of legislation seeking to limit the human rights and bodily autonomy of transgender and nonbinary (TNB) people through restricting healthcare access, criminalizing caregivers and medical professionals who support affirming care for TNB young people, banning sports participation, prohibiting the acquisition of accurate documentation, and ceasing legal recognition of TNB people altogether. Social Work is committed to social justice; gender identity/expression are categories of diversity the profession is ethically required to engage with in the pursuit of justice. However, the profession has been largely silent in the face of these legislative attacks.

Methods:

This exploratory study utilized an anonymous digital survey to examine social work educators' understanding of these legislative efforts, and the profession's role in response. Descriptive statistics were generated with SPSS (version 28.0.1.1 (14)). Thematic analysis was conducted to identify categories of responses within each of the open-ended questions.

Findings:

The vast majority of respondents believe the profession - including professional organizations (95%, n=155) and schools (93%, n=153) - has an ethical duty to take action.

Discussion:

The legislation examined in this study focuses on TNB people, however many respondents understand legislative attacks targeting TNB people as connected to broader legislative and regulatory efforts to limit bodily autonomy and access to education for all people. While the CSWE EPAS include gender identity as a dimension of diversity that social work students must understand, there is no requirement that students learn about TNB people as part of their degree program.

Implications:

Concrete strategies for education and organizing are needed to guide schools of social work in addressing cis-supremacist legislation within the classroom setting, as well as at the local, state, and national policy levels. Professional organizations are well-situated to facilitate the development and dissemination of such strategies.

(102) Ageing Queerly: Living Archives of Resistance, Struggle and Joy

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Drawing on biographic narrative interviews conducted in Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Slovenia in the context of the research project TRACE - Tracing Queer Citizenship over Time: Ageing, ageism and age-related LGBTI+ politics in Europe (ERC funded, 2023-2027), this Discussion Symposium will evolve around the experiences of ageing of self-identified LGBTQI+ people over 60 years old, in five countries. The findings demonstrate the significance of cumulative embodied knowledge of those who have outlasted criminalisation and the AIDS crisis, arriving in the 21st century as living archives of fundamental social and political changes.

Focusing on the embodied knowledge offered by older LGBTQI+ people, we argue for the importance of queer epistemologies and queer citizenship towards more inclusive and democratic societies.

This symposium includes the following speakers and papers in the following order:

Irene Massa, The Invisibility Triangle: Being Queer, Older and Islander in Italy

Anže Jurček, The Joys and Challenges of LGBTQI+ Ageing Research in Slovenia

Joana Brilhante, "Into the spaceship, Granny": Memories from Older Queers in the Maltese Archipelago

Pako Chalkidis, An Archive of Flesh and Knowledge: Biographical Accounts of Ageing Queerly in Greece

Ana Cristina Santos, Queer Joy as Archives of Resistance: Insights from Older Queers in Portugal

(103) Social Worker Views on the Rights and Acceptance of Transgender and Non-binary Individuals in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Aim & Objectives:

This study explores social worker views on the rights and acceptance of transgender and non-binary individuals in Aotearoa New Zealand. Despite the increasing visibility of trans and non-binary communities, there is little research on how social workers in Aotearoa engage with and understand these identities.

Methods:

Data were collected through an anonymous online qualitative survey (September – December 2023), capturing views from 122 social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand. Themes were identified and presented using the “poemish” method, whereby respondents’ views were collated into haiku. This poetic form, emphasising brevity, was chosen to promote emotional engagement with the themes.

Findings/Outcomes:

37 haiku were constructed, representing 10 themes that reflect a broad spectrum of social worker beliefs, including “gender-affirming care is a human right”, “fears of talking about the topic”, “there are only two genders”, “voices of biological women are being silenced”, “children being at risk of transitioning too early”, and “the belief that social workers can disagree with trans and non-binary rights and practise with neutrality.”

Discussion/Conclusion:

While many respondents supported trans and non-binary individuals’ rights, the findings highlight a significant gap in understanding among social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand, regarding trans and non-binary individuals. The presence of fear, risk, and danger narratives, suggests that misinformation and uncertainty shape some social workers’ perspectives. The belief that neutrality in practice can be maintained despite holding anti-trans and non-binary views also needs further attention and suggests an underlying tension between personal beliefs and professional ethics. This raises questions about the impact of such perspectives on the quality of care and support provided to trans and non-binary clients.

Implications for Practice:

Training in gender-affirming care and the rights of trans and non-binary individuals should be strengthened, and ongoing discussions are needed to assess whether neutrality is possible in practice.

(104) Exploring Gender Diversity in Finnish Social Work: Advancing Justice and Rights

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Introduction:

Social work plays a crucial role in promoting justice and inclusivity, yet gender diversity remains a complex issue within its practices. Despite growing awareness, Finnish social work structures still prioritize binary gender norms. This research examines how social workers recognize, interpret, and integrate gender diversity into their practices, highlighting tensions between policy ideals and professional realities.

Using qualitative focus group discussions, this study explores the challenges and possibilities of embedding gender diversity into social work. Thematic content analysis, informed by the theory of recognition, critically examines systemic constraints, professional competencies, and intersectionality's role in gender-inclusive practice. This research identifies knowledge gaps and structural barriers while contributing to the development of more inclusive and justice-oriented social work.

Aim & Objectives:

This study explores how Finnish social workers identify, recognize, and justify gender diversity in practice. This oral presentation outlines the preliminary findings of my PhD research.

Methods:

Five focus groups with 15 social workers in total were conducted. Data is analyzed using thematic content analysis within the framework of theory of recognition.

Findings:

Preliminary results show social workers struggle with gender diversity within a binary-structured system. Many express a commitment to justice but face systemic and educational barriers to inclusive practice. Key themes include the need for better understanding of non-binary identities and intersectionality's role in compounded marginalization. Despite a willingness to adopt inclusive approaches, social workers encounter institutional constraints and resource limitations.

Conclusion:

The study underscores the need for structural reforms, policy changes, and enhanced training to support gender inclusiveness. An intersectional approach is essential to addressing diverse lived experiences.

Implications for Practice:

This research informs social work, policymakers, and educators about integrating gender diversity into training and practice, fostering equitable service delivery for gender-diverse and marginalized populations.

(105) How are sexual identities and sexuality of prisoners constructed in Swiss prisons?

Daniele Bigoni¹

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Introduction:

Institutions such as prisons control and regulate both the sexual identity and sexuality of prisoners. Sexual identities and sexual needs of prisoners are a challenge for both prison administrations and prisoners.

Aim:

This presentation examines how prison staff construct the sexual identities and sexuality of prisoners in German-speaking Swiss prisons. This provides important insights into the context in which social workers address issues of sexual possibilities and sexual identities.

Methods:

A qualitative research design was applied, based on sixteen semi-structured expert interviews. Data analysis followed the grounded theory approach of Strauss/Corbin.

Experts from various professions within the prison system were interviewed in order to obtain the broadest possible range of data. The study was carried out in fourteen different prisons and one training centre for prison staff.

Findings:

The results indicate that prisoners are generally assumed to be heterosexual unless a different sexual identity is explicitly known. Intervention only occurs when the visibility of a prisoner's non-heterosexual orientation is perceived as a security risk, as it disrupts daily prison life and requires protection for non-heterosexual prisoners against abuse.

The findings highlight a contradictory approach to the sexual needs of prisoners. On the one hand, opportunities for sexual expression between prisoners and their partners are strictly regulated and controlled. On the other hand, same-sex sexual contact is relegated to the prison subculture, where it is simultaneously tabooed and associated with fears of non-consensual acts.

Conclusions:

The results suggest that prisons in German-speaking Switzerland operate within a heteronormative framework, despite the awareness of non-heterosexual prisoners and same-sex sexual contact among inmates. This raises the question of how Swiss prisons can be better supported in addressing the sexual identities and needs of prisoners in the future.

(106) Gender-based Violence Against Young Women in Bulgaria – Experiences, Strategies and Resources for Resistance

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Gender-based violence against young women is a serious social problem in Bulgaria and a large part of it is happening in the context of young women's intimate relationships. According to the nationally representative 'Survey on Gender-Based Violence' (2021-2022) 36.3 % of women aged 18 - 29 have experienced intimate partner violence.

The aim of the presentation is to analyze the experiences, strategies and resources for resistance against gender-based violence among young women and to outline the complex way in which the threat for gender-based violence is reflected in the young women's perceptions and attitudes. We seek an answer to two questions – first, which features and contradictions of the context contribute to their vulnerability to violence and secondly, what are the key social, cultural and personal resources which help them avoid and overcome gender-based violence.

We use data from the research project "Young people's intimacy in Bulgaria – cultures, practices and risks", funded by the Bulgarian Scientific Fund. The data is gathered through qualitative methods - 54 interviews and 7 focus groups.

According to the results, most young women, especially educated and middle class, share critical attitudes towards the various forms of intimate partner violence and express egalitarian attitudes towards intimacy. These attitudes reflect the influence of the so-called "therapeutic culture" and can be viewed as signs of a cultural change which provides socio-cultural resources for young women's resistance against violence. A second significant finding based on case studies concerns the existence of diverse forms of gender-based violence against young women and the importance of specific background conditions that increase their vulnerability such as lack of adequate social services for prevention and intervention, the patriarchal social norms, especially in the small towns and among ethnic communities.

(107) The Mediating Role of Identity Centrality in the Relationship Between Black LGBTQ Community Belongingness and Subjective Well-being

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Aim & Objectives:

Evidence suggests that a strong sense of belonging to identity-based communities can mitigate the adverse effects of minority stress. Recognizing the intersectional racial, sexual, and gender identities for Black LGBTQ individuals, the current study sought to examine how the prominence of these identities influences overall well-being.

Methods:

Data were drawn from a cross-sectional mixed-method online survey administered to 345 Black LGBTQ adults (Mage=27) in the U.S., focusing on participants' sense of belongingness to identity-based minority communities, as well as their mental health and overall well-being. Black LGBTQ community belongingness (CB) was measured using nine items ($\alpha=.861$). Subjective well-being (SWB) was assessed via the 14-item Mental Health Continuum–Short Form ($\alpha=.893$). Black LGBTQ identity centrality (IC) was measured using five items ($\alpha=.766$). Covariates included age, microaggressions, education, and rurality. A mediation analysis using PROCESS Macro v4.3 tested whether Black LGBTQ IC mediates the relationship between Black LGBTQ CB and SWB, controlling for the covariates.

Findings:

Results showed the total effect of Black LGBTQ CB on WB was statistically significant ($\beta=0.49$, $p<.001$). The direct effect of CB on IC was statistically significant ($\beta=0.21$, $p<.001$). The direct effect of IC on SWB was also statistically significant ($\beta=0.40$, $p<.001$). The indirect effect of CB on SWB through IC was statistically significant ($\beta=0.09$, 95% CI [0.25, 0.17]), suggesting partial mediation. When IC was included in the model, the direct effect of CB on subjective well-being decreased ($\beta=0.40$, $p<.001$), retaining statistical significance. All covariates significantly predicted subjective well-being.

Discussion/Conclusion:

Findings underscore the importance of external community support and internal identity processes in promoting well-being. CB influences well-being, and reinforcing IC amplifies these benefits.

Implications for Practice:

Integrating intersectionality in therapeutic strategies may help individuals navigate discrimination and stigma more effectively. Strengthening IC alongside CB can support the well-being of Black LGBTQ individuals.

(108) The husband stitch and the infrastructure of patriarchal medical violence

Teja Kosi¹

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This presentation will investigate a contemporary medical practice known as the »husband stitch«, an unnecessary and harmful surgical procedure in which one or more extra stitches beyond the number needed are added to repair a woman's vagina after vaginal birth. The purpose of the procedure is to tighten the vaginal opening, and, as its very name suggests, it is underpinned by the idea of increasing men's sexual pleasure.

Based on the author's cultural archive of ethnographic voices, field observations, media texts, and secondary sources, this procedure will be reflected upon as a form of patriarchal medical violence. Violence is most visible in cases where the husband or partner of the labouring woman requests the procedure without her knowledge or informed consent. In another scenario, the figure of the husband or partner is replaced by a medical doctor who decides to perform the procedure. In the third scenario, the woman herself requests the procedure.

These scenarios will be further explored using the concepts of patriarchal aesthetics, sexual pleasure, dollification, and the ideology of choice. As the husband stitch is but one example of the female experience that is usually ignored, rendered invisible, or, if addressed, often denied, the presentation will examine the very existence of this practice and its discursive, affective and material traces. In doing so, it will shed light on the still-persisting regimes of patriarchal knowledge production and violence, which, in this particular case, persist under the guise of objective science.

(110) Queering Families and Reproductive Rights in Ireland: Systemic, Historic and Current Othering

Fiachra O Suilleabhain¹, Danielle Mackle, Declan Coogan

¹*University College Cork, Cork, Ireland*

Aim/Objectives:

The healthcare system in Ireland relies on a mixed economy of welfare. Until 2023, all fertility treatments were very costly and only provided by the private healthcare sector, and therefore seen as a social privilege. This oral presentation will critically explore the introduction of free assisted conception treatment in Irish private clinics since September 2023. The objective of this paper is to contend that the strict eligibility criteria of this new healthcare provision have only served to embed the pre-existing heteronormative reification of conjugal progeny in Irish family policy.

Methods:

This paper employs Bacchi's (2012) WPR method to critically explore the shift in Irish reproductive health policy.

Findings:

Applying a WPR method enables the identification of seemingly accepted assumptions about reproductive health in Ireland including:

- That providing free access to conception assistance in private clinics addresses concerns about reproductive health disparities in Ireland;
- That sexual and reproductive health, such as fertility treatment, are seen as private 'family matters' and not seen as an aspect of a universal health system;
- That reproduction and procreative desires exist for heterosexual, married couples only and;
- That 'acceptable' state provision of reproduction health should be limited to the most minimal interventions where the 'ingredients to make a baby' are provided by an intended heterosexual married couple.

Discussion:

While increasing state-provided reproductive health care is welcome, the identification of affordability as the 'wicked problem' (Bacchi 2016) while simultaneously limiting accessibility has systemically othered and marginalised the reproductive rights of unmarried, single and non-heterosexual people.

Conclusion:

This paper will conclude by asserting that heterosexist assumptions about the nature of family persist in Ireland despite developments in reproductive healthcare services.

Implications for Practice:

This paper will provide an impetus for queer advocacy by social work professionals in medical, maternity and civil service settings.

(111) Loneliness, Social Isolation & Interventions Among Older LGBTQ+ People: A Scoping Review

Willem Stander¹, [Dora Jandrić](#)¹, Jason Schaub²

¹University Of Birmingham, Birmingham, United Kingdom, ²University of Bristol, Bristol, University of Bristol

Introduction:

Loneliness and social isolation are significant public health concerns in aging societies, linked to various negative health and mental health outcomes. Interventions aimed at reducing these phenomena are widely advocated. However, older lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning (LGBTQ+) individuals aged 50+ have been largely overlooked in research, practice, and policy, with previous reviews conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic and focusing exclusively on sexual minority populations.

Aims and Objectives:

This international systematic scoping review synthesizes the range and scope of the empirical peer-reviewed evidence on loneliness, social isolation, and associated interventions among older LGBTQ+ people.

Methods:

Following a six-stage approach to scoping reviews, four databases were searched: Medline, PsycINFO, Social Policy and Practice, and Social Sciences Citation Index. Data synthesis included quality appraisal and thematic analysis, as well as consultation with stakeholders and experts by lived experience (Opening Doors, a charity for LGBTQ+ elders, which unfortunately closed in 2024). Of the initial 945 articles identified, 49 studies were included.

Findings/Outcomes:

Early findings identify key factors associated with loneliness and social isolation among older LGBTQ+ people, with a particular focus on intersectionality and differences among these LGBTQ+ subgroups. While there is a significant lack of high-quality studies evaluating interventions, some evidence on befriending schemes is promising.

Discussion/Conclusion:

This review highlights the need for more robust data on the effectiveness of interventions addressing loneliness and social isolation among older LGBTQ+ individuals. It also discusses the implications for future research, practice, and policy.

Implications for Practice:

The review underscores the necessity for more comprehensive data to inform effective interventions and policies aimed at reducing loneliness and social isolation in older LGBTQ+ populations.

(112) Sources of Information for Sexuality and Sexual Health in LGBTQ Adolescents

Thelma Begley

¹*Trinity College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland*

Aim:

The aim of this study was to determine the information sources on sexuality and sexual health used by LGBTQ adolescents (aged 13-19) and their usefulness.

Introduction:

The development of positive sexual health behaviours in adolescence can lay the foundation for positive sexuality and relationships across the life span. Sufficient education can assist young LGBTQ people in the development of confident decision making in sexual activity. However, there is a lack of evidence on where LGBTQ adolescents access information on sexuality and sexual health and how useful they find information they receive.

Methods:

Findings were drawn from an online cross sectional survey design which collected data from LGBTQ adolescents aged 13-19 in Ireland. Both closed and open-ended questions were used to gain data in three topic areas - LGBTQ orientation, Readiness for Safer Sex and Sexual Activity/ Behaviour. Data were analysed using descriptive, inferential statistics and thematic analysis of open-ended questions. Ethical approval was obtained from author's institution.

Findings/ Outcomes:

Findings indicate that different sources were used for different topics, with primary sources of information a combination of in-person and internet/ media sources. Commonly used sources were female guardian, LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ friends, LGBTQ community, school, internet searches (LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ focussed) and porn, all with varying usefulness. Porn was the most common cited source of information.

Discussion/ Conclusion:

Findings provide rich insights into the unique way that LGBTQ adolescents source information. In so doing it moves the discourse beyond broad discussion on sources of information and looks at sources used for different topics. This can be factored into sexuality education.

Implications for Practice:

The findings of the study have implications for future LGBTI+ and sexual health policy, including school based RSE education and inclusiveness of the information provided, practice for healthcare professionals, education and future research.

(113) Exploring Good Support for Trans and/or Gender Non-conforming People with a Learning Disability

Lorne Power¹

¹*University Of Sussex, Brighton, United Kingdom*

Introduction:

Research suggests that people with a learning disability's ability to identify with and express gender diversity is heavily constrained and regulated due to paternalistic and cis-normative assumptions of their staff. This can be associated with people with a learning disability experiencing discriminatory abuse, poor mental health and social isolation.

Aim & Objectives:

This ongoing doctoral research aims to explore what support trans and/or gender nonconforming people with a learning disability want from their staff in relation to their gender identity and expression.

Methods:

Based in an approach of inclusive, trauma-informed research and queer theory, this ongoing doctoral study aims to explore what good support means to 8 trans and/or gender nonconforming people with a learning disability receiving support in England, Wales or Scotland. Data collection will involve ethnographic participant observation and creative methods. Data will be analysed in partnership with the project's lived experience steering group.

Findings/Outcomes:

I hope that, as a result of this research, trans and gender-nonconforming people with a learning disability have more agency over the support they want and need and experience less discrimination.

Discussion/Conclusion:

This research seeks to centre the voices and experiences of people with a learning disability in the context of a media and political environment that promotes 'gender critical' views that neurodivergent people are unable to understand and make decisions regarding gender. I will consider the implications that these stances have for disability rights more widely and call for social workers to stand with trans people.

Implication(s) for Practice:

I aim to develop and deliver staff training in partnership with my lived experience steering group, co-produce an Easyread journal article based on research findings and develop an accessible workbook based on the methods so people with a learning disability can tell staff what support they want in relation to their gender.

(114) Faceless Stranger, Feminist Man, Friend, Father

Samuel Vermote¹

¹*University College London, LONDON, United Kingdom*

Over the past decennia, strict policies and a lack of NHS funding for clinical donor insemination in the UK have driven aspiring lesbian parents to source donor sperm themselves through unregulated websites and social media. Online sperm donation's rise in popularity has not only raised important questions about the inaccessibility of assisted reproduction to LGBTQ+ folk, but also the needs and sensitivities of this growing patient group.

Bridging the disciplinary gap between social science and history, this article seeks to take a reproductive justice approach to DIY donor insemination by foregrounding its often-overlooked origins as a grassroots, feminist form of lesbian family building pioneered in the 1970s and 1980s. During this period, a new type of donor emerged who treated their donation as a leftist political act in support of feminist lesbians. Whereas today DIY sperm donation is often associated with morally reprehensible behaviour like manipulation and sexual coercion, anti-sexist men during the 1970s and 1980s endeavoured to anticipate and account for the needs of would-be lesbian mothers.

Examining donors' motivations for providing sperm in relationship to a wider effort to disrupt hegemonic ideals of masculinity, I demonstrate the ways in which these men constructed a social script for sperm donation that closely aligns with the values of reproductive justice. In doing so, I bring lesbian history in dialogue with masculinity studies to help offer insight into the unique needs and struggles of aspiring lesbian mothers today.

(116) Experiences of People with Intersex Variation(s) in Ireland

Thelma Begley¹, Carmel Downes¹, Karin O'Sullivan¹, Jan DeVries¹, Louise Doyle¹, Brian Keogh¹, Mark Monaghan¹, Renee Molloy², Matt Kennedy³, Agnes Higgins¹

¹Trinity College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland, ²Monash University, Melbourne, Australia, ³Belongto Youth Organisation, Dublin, Ireland

Aim:

To develop an understanding of the experiences of people who have variation(s) in sex characteristics participants in the Being LGBTI+ in Ireland Study.

Introduction:

People with variation(s) in sex characteristics are a predominantly hidden population who have differences in reproductive, chromosomal, or hormonal levels which do not align with how male, or female is defined. To date minimal research has been conducted with this population in Ireland.

Methods:

Following ethical approval by the author's institution, data was collected on health and wellbeing using an anonymous online survey of both closed and open-ended questions. Data analysis comprised univariate and bivariate analysis while data from open-ended questions were analysed using a modified version of Braun and Clarke's (2021) guidance.

Findings:

Thirty-one participants (n=31) identified as having a variation(s) in sex characteristic. Most participants discovered their variation(s) incidentally. A lack of transparency/ disclosure was evident relating to the variation(s) the person had and the medical interventions that had been done in childhood. Increased psychological, emotional or mental health issues were reported with participants experiencing increased rates of anxiety, depression and stress with a high lifetime prevalence of self-harm, suicidal thoughts and suicide attempt(s). Mental health difficulties stemmed from reported negative reactions to their variation(s) in sex characteristics when it was disclosed to others contributing to feelings of isolation and rejection.

Discussion/ Conclusion:

Findings add to the knowledge and research healthcare experiences, wellbeing and mental health status of people with variation(s) in sex characteristics in Ireland.

Implications for Practice:

These findings can inform healthcare professionals and policies, LGBTI+ organisations and the general public leading to future research with people who have variation(s) in sex characteristics.

(117) Sexual Myths Among Adults Aged Between Twenty and Thirty-Five Years

Maša Bunderla¹

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Sexual myths are inaccurate, unscientific, and exaggerated beliefs about sexuality that individuals often accept as true, significantly influencing their sexual experiences and behaviors. Comprehensive sex education, addressing all aspects of human sexuality, remains the most effective method to limit the spread of such myths. This study investigates the impact of sexual myths on the experiences of adults aged between twenty and thirty-five years, while also examining their encounters with sex education.

The sample consisted of 17 participants (5 men and 12 women), who participated in in-depth interviews. Findings reveal that most participants lacked adequate sex education from their parents or guardians. Both formal and informal sex education proved incomplete, failing to cover essential topics participants wished to explore. Furthermore, the persistence of certain sexual myths among adults negatively impacts their sexual experiences.

This research highlights the role of social work in addressing sexual myths and advancing comprehensive sex education. Social workers, equipped with interdisciplinary knowledge and practical skills, play a key role in challenging misconceptions about sexuality and fostering open, inclusive communication with individuals and communities. By integrating sexuality into social work education and practice, social workers can better support individuals in navigating sexuality-related issues, which are vital for holistic well-being.

This study recommends specific improvements for the content of sex education programs and suggests directions for future research to address these gaps.

(121) A Qualitative Exploration of Social Support Experiences of Trans Women/Transfeminine Adults Accessing Estrogen-based Gender-affirming Hormone Therapy in Canada

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Aims & Objectives:

Gender-affirming hormone therapy (GAHT) is commonly accessed to support the well-being of transgender (trans) and gender diverse (TGD) persons. Social support is also a powerful way to feel valued. We aimed to qualitatively explore sources of, positive/negative aspects of, and impacts of social support among trans women/transfeminine persons utilizing estrogen-based GAHT in Canada.

Methods:

This study draws on secondary qualitative data collected from open-ended responses to a cross-sectional survey (n= 212 trans women/transfeminine persons) taking estrogen-based GAHT for ≥ 3 months. This analysis draws on written responses to: "Please tell us about the people/person who supported or supports your transition" and "Please share with us anything you'd like regarding your satisfaction [of the impact of your GAHT] with comfort with a) sexual/romantic/intimate partners; b) friends; and c) family (biological and chosen)." Qualitative analysis involved open inductive coding consistent with a thematic analysis approach.

Findings/Outcomes:

Qualitative findings demonstrated fluctuating levels of social support from different sources including partners, family (parents, siblings), friends (including queer/trans-identified), and colleagues. Participants' narratives revealed positive examples of social support and negative examples of interpersonal interactions (e.g., misgendering), influenced by individual emotional and/or physical capacity, anti-trans stigmatizing beliefs, and pre-transition relationship dynamics. Positive impacts of social support included improved mental health, community building for resilience and advocacy, and trans joy.

Discussion/Conclusion:

The positive impacts of medical gender affirmation may be enhanced through fostering social support networks of TGD persons. Findings inform TGD persons, providers, families, and other support systems of the necessity for social support and ways to promote social support.

Implications for Practice:

These findings inform social workers' and other allied health professionals' understanding of both the breadth of social support sources available to TGD persons and the importance of engaging these social support networks in the provision of GAHT with TGD persons.

(122) Teaching Reproductive Justice Policy: Engaging Social Work Students Globally

Kim McKay¹

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Please note, this is not a research presentation, but a teaching presentation.

Globally we are living through a dramatic policy time as some countries are broadening their policies on bodily autonomy, gender equity, sexual autonomy, supports for raising children, healthcare access and more. While other countries are using policy to actively restrict these topics and target vulnerable populations.

It is an important time for social work students, as emerging professionals, to understand the reproductive justice framework in analyzing the intent and impact of this wide variety of global policies. Reproductive justice includes four main pillars: the right to not have a child, the right to have a child, the right to raise your child(ren) in a safe and healthy environment, and sexual autonomy and gender freedom for all humans (Ross & Solinger, 2017).

Through agency, local, national, and international comparisons, social work students can strengthen their critical thinking skills on exploring how values, beliefs, power, control and language can drive and impact policies. Additionally students need the opportunity to grapple with the ethical dilemmas reproductive justice policies may pose.

This presentation will provide the attendees with teaching examples for engaging social work students in both their own national and international reproductive justice policies. Through a disability, LGBTQIA+, and race lens the resources shared will cover reproductive justice policy topics that include abortion access, adoption, agency-level, artificial reproductive technologies, birth control, bodily autonomy, carceral system, childcare, citizenship, disability (developmental, intellectual, & physical), environmental justice, eugenics, family policing system, fertility tourism, gender equity, gender-affirming healthcare, healthcare (access & cost), migration, parental leave, personhood, population controls, school, sexuality education, and sex work.

(124) Community Social Work and Mutual Aid in the Ballroom Scene: Experiences of Young Queer and Trans People of Colour in the Nordics

Jamie Lee¹

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Objectives:

The aim of this presentation is to discuss a doctoral study in its early stages, with a focus on the theoretical background and planned fieldwork. Queer, Trans, Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (QTBIPOC) face intersecting layers of oppression, increasing their vulnerability to negative socioemotional and health problems. When oppressive systems have failed to support them, QTBIPOC have created their own forms of community support through the Ballroom Scene, in which Houses provide kinship structures or “chosen family”. While the Ballroom Scene started in Harlem, the community has spread internationally, with Houses creating international networks of support.

This study aims to highlight the emergence of Ballroom in the Nordics and QTBIPOC youth’s lived experiences of community care within it. The objective of this presentation is to outline the Nordic context of the study and explore how nontraditional community work is emerging in unraveling Nordic welfare states, especially for populations at the intersection of interacting structural oppressions. Finally, the plan for fieldwork is introduced.

Methods:

Research will be conducted through critical ethnography using interviews and participant observations.

Outcomes:

QTBIPOC are often pathologized, with research and media problematizing these populations. This study will shift the narrative to capture the joy and beauty experienced when the community takes care of its own - demonstrating an alternative understanding of social work practice. It will be the first academic study on the Nordic Ballroom Scene and will pave the way for further research into practices of care in QTBIPOC communities.

Conclusion:

The project is a doctoral dissertation in its preliminary phases and the research plan and contextual research will be presented.

Implications:

This study will inform Nordic social work practice through its exploration of community care in the Nordic Ballroom Scene, aiming to redefine and reimagine how care work can take place.

(126) Somatic Mastery of Sexual Trauma

Andrew Pari¹

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Introduction:

Sexualized violence is a devastating lifetime trauma that occurs in high numbers, both in the U.S. and around the world. Yet sexual expression of sexualized violence in survivors, referred to as Consensual Non-Consent (CNC), is a known phenomenon in the kink realm which has shown healing effects in SA survivors.

Aim & Objectives:

Understanding how survivors, consciously and unconsciously, seek relief of symptoms by replaying aspects of their experience.

Learning how exposure, through guided re-creation of sexual trauma, may provide significant symptom and psychological relief to sexualized violence victims.

Methods:

Qualitative interviews and analysis of over 50 female subjects.

Presentation of a model for exposure treatment, rooted in current trauma-informed principles will be proposed and discussed.

Findings/Outcomes:

The psychological purpose of the repetition compulsion has been documented as a healthy attempt to master unwanted feelings and behaviors.

One aspect not addressed clinically or in the literature is the use of prolonged exposure treatment in the context of repetition compulsion for sexual assault victims.

Discussion/Conclusion:

The presenter takes their work of the past two decades a quantum leap forward by reviewing the expression of repetition compulsion in the kink world.

Healing trauma through kink is largely in its infancy as an acceptable treatment approach. Creator of the concept of Curative Kink, this presenter will attempt to address and advance these concepts.

Implication(s) for Practice:

Reducing trauma amongst sexualized violence victims using this model can free them to understand and enjoy these desires and urges in a positive, shame-free way.

(128) Image Based Sexual Abuse and the Impact this has on the health and wellbeing of LGBTQ individuals. Outcomes of an International PhD study

Ronnie Meechan¹

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Introduction/Background:

This paper provides content for the 'health and wellbeing' and 'Justice & Rights' themes. 'A developing form of violence and abuse is the production and dissemination of intimate images: a phenomenon that is more recently conceptualized as Image Based Sexual Abuse (IBSA). Developments in technology have extended the ways in which IBSA can be enacted.' The majority of research to date in relation to IBSA focusing on the experience of heterosexual women, with building evidence suggesting that LGBTQ individuals reporting higher levels of digital abuse in comparison to their heterosexual peers. Research undertaken by the Centre for Innovative Public Health Research found a significant difference in the behaviors relating to sharing of non-consensual images between LGBTQ and heterosexual/cisgender respondents; LGBTQ+ respondents reporting higher levels of threats or sharing of images. This is not a UK-specific issue, with similar findings in Australia and across the EU.

Method:

In this paper I will present the findings from my international PhD, with participants from eight countries, key messages include; LGBTQ+ experience higher levels of IBSA or threats to share intimate images. The research focus is primarily on LGBTQ+ individuals and is predominantly generated from western cultures. The presentation will end by drawing out the key lessons for health and social care services including arguments for the need for an interdisciplinary approach to support victims. The presentation will also present preliminary findings of qualitative interviews of LGBTQ+ individuals who have experienced IBSA in the UK.

Practice implications:

More research needs to be undertaken with LGBTQ+ individuals with a qualitative focus exploring impact that IBSA has on the well-being and signposting for support. Multi-disciplinary approaches are important to support LGBTQ youth and adults who have experienced IBSA, and help them address the issues arising from these difficult experiences.

(129) Disabled people negotiate gender, sexual identity and self-directed social care support in England: how does choice and control operate?

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Introduction:

Putting disabled people in charge of their own support was a central component of the UK personalisation agenda. Austerity, staff recruitment difficulties and local authority retrenchment have meant that the experience for disabled people has not always lived up to the rhetorical promise. In this context, disabled people with marginalised sexual and/or gender identities face difficult choices in everyday interactions of support that trouble the idea that control routinely sits with them.

Methods:

In this presentation, we draw on two, qualitative research studies with disabled people who use self-directed support in which they discuss navigating gender and sexual identity.

Findings:

In both studies, there are opportunities for disabled people to draw on support that is empowering, but we also hear about 'bad bargains' that they are sometimes forced to make. We argue that the hard-won goals of choice and control are being degraded and confronting LGBTQI+ and non-binary disabled people with sometimes impossible dilemmas.

Discussion/Conclusions:

The promise of personalisation is that it can set those who want it free from being supported by strangers over whom they have little say and less control. Living with a marginalised identity becomes harder in the times that we live in, and home should not be a place where these precarities are inflicted upon people or only averted by people subjugating their true selves, especially when navigating their identity may well have already cost them dear. In our studies, we see too many examples of the operationalisation of the policy working in ways that control and oppress.

Implications for Practice:

As citizenship rights get stripped away from disabled people, sexual and gender identity rights are less well developed by comparison to other areas of disability rights claims. What our research shows is the possibility of support relationships that promote, 'an ordinary, dignified life'.

(130) Resisting Weaponized Tears and Institutional Homophobia: Lessons from the Frontline

Ranjith Kulatilake¹

¹*School of Social Work, York University, Toronto, Canada*

A racialized, LGBTQ+ refugee visits a community agency in Toronto. She requests a staff member (SM) for the LGBTQ+ refugee support worker (SW). The SM's hostility frightens her. She informs the SW that a SM became "aggressive" when she mentioned "LGBTQ". Later, they encounter the SM. The client whispers, "it is her". Approaching them SM raises her voice, "I didn't do anything...". Terrified, the client flees the scene. The SW follows her mumbling, "clients come from different traumatized backgrounds". He informs the director what happened. From the SM, the director hears a twisted narrative: the SW "came with a client to attack" her. SW's pleas to hear the client out becomes futile. The SM takes sick leave for several days. The director asks the SW to apologize to the SM, to avoid "escalating the incident". The SM is a full-time, unionized member, whereas the SW was merely a Social Work Placement Student. At a mediation hearing, the SW apologizes. Bearing the pains of this injustice the SW, a racialized gay immigrant, completes his placement by organizing the LGBTQ+ refugees to march in the Pride Parade. Its success persuades the agency to hire him. The SW develops a thriving LGBTQ+ refugee resettlement support program.

Using autoethnographic storytelling, this paper outlines the LGBTQ+ refugee support program's envisioning and successes as ongoing resistance. Highlighting the need for creative strategizing to resist homophobia, it posits yielding to weaponized tears as an institutional excuse of homophobia and cis-heteronormativity. Using Critical Race Theory (race as a social construct), Post Colonial Theory (displacement and colonial gaze) and Marxist Theory (racialized capitalism), it explains the organizing of predominantly Black and racialized LGBTQ+ refugees as reclaiming margins. The names of the agency and the program will be masked to ensure confidentiality. The SW is the presenter of this paper.

(132) Supporting Non-Coercive and Non-Discriminatory Practices in Social Work Toward Sex Workers: A Matter of Justice!

Julie Deslandes Leduc¹, Maria Nengeh Mensah²

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Introduction:

Men who engage in sex work face a double marginalization associated with "prostitution" and homophobia. As a result, they encounter numerous forms of social, legal, and health-related discriminations that harm their health, well-being, and professional development. Sex workers are also made invisibles by the adoption of a new legislation on "prostitution" in Canada, which aligns with an abolitionist approach.

Objectives:

This presentation aims to present the results of this research. It focuses on the injustices faced by sex workers in their practice of sex work and their gender expression, as well as the strategies they implement to gain recognition.

Methods:

This was a community-based photovoice study conducted as part of a master's program in social work (Deslandes Leduc, 2023) with 10 participants involved in sex work. Supervised by Maria Nengeh Mensah (Professor in social work, UQAM), this research was conducted in collaboration with the TDS program of RÉZO, a Montreal-based organization focused on the health and well-being of men and LGBTQ+ individuals.

Findings and discussion:

The sex workers interviewed experience relational, legal, and social injustices. These include sexual violence, invisibilization, and precarization of their work practices, as well as gender-based violence. Participants identified three main strategies to gain recognition: engage with environments that promote the free expression of their identity, foster social solidarity among and for sex workers and contribute to research to shed light on personal and professional realities.

Implications for practice: This research highlights the importance of advocating for the recognition of male sex work and supporting non-coercive and non-discriminatory intervention practices rooted in social justice. It also emphasizes the major role of community organizations in fostering solidarity among sex workers and providing social support.

(133) Experiences Of Non-Binary People Regarding Medical Transition In Slovenia

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Introduction:

Gender identity and medical transition are complex areas involving diverse experiences of trans* binary and non-binary individuals. Non-binary people often face a lack of understanding and support, even from specialized healthcare providers. Given the emotionally challenging nature of medical transition, they seek support from NGOs, peers, family, and friends, but often receive the least from healthcare professionals.

Aim & Objectives:

Understanding the experiences of non-binary individuals with medical transition in Slovenia involves access to information, healthcare services, and medical professionals' attitudes. Key aspects include gender identity respect, psychological and psychiatric care, hormone therapy, surgical procedures, and challenges with unregulated hormone use. Identifying needs and barriers is crucial for fostering more inclusive social and healthcare practices.

Methods:

To our knowledge, this empirical study is the first one to focus on the experiences of non-binary individuals with medical transition in Slovenia. We collected data via semi-structured interviews, employing qualitative data analysis methods. Participants began their medical transition before November 2024, with the longest experience dating back to 2018.

Findings:

Medical transition is essential for non-binary individuals' mental well-being, yet Slovenia's healthcare system often fails to provide adequate support. Many rely on NGOs, though access is unequal, especially in rural areas. Delays in healthcare can lead to unregulated hormone therapy or adopting binary trans* identities for faster processes.

Conclusion:

Slovenia needs a more comprehensive framework for medical transition, including clearer guidelines and improved accessibility. Decentralizing healthcare is crucial, as services are mostly in the capital. Multifaceted support systems are also needed for better experiences during medical transition.

Implication(s) for Practice:

Social workers could provide information, emotional support, and assistance in healthcare and bureaucratic processes while advocating for trans* rights. Their involvement in the transition process would enhance service accessibility, reduce stigma and structural barriers.

(134) Supporting Trans and Nonbinary Students in Practicum Education

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Engaging in social change efforts and working for the liberation of all people are foundational values of the social work profession. Practicum education is often termed the “signature pedagogy” of social work in which aspiring professionals are socialized into professional norms and values. Recent literature documents a lack of trans-affirming practicum opportunities for trans and nonbinary students. While some literature exists regarding ways to support LGBTQ students, little is known about the experiences of TNB students, particularly as it relates to practicum education, nor the experiences of practicum education staff in working with TNB students. The purpose of this exploratory study is to examine the experiences of practicum education staff working with TNB social work students. Practicum educators in the United States were invited to participate from a random sample of graduate schools of social work drawn from the CSWE list of accredited schools and organized by region. Data were collected through 24 virtual semi-structured interviews, in which participants were asked to share their experiences working with TNB students in the practicum education process. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by the research team. Dedoose was used for coding and analysis. Data analysis was guided by the heuristic process of phenomenological inquiry described by Moustakas.

Preliminary findings indicate that:

Practicum education is often under-resourced and understaffed, while practicum educators are charged with implementing the signature pedagogy of our professional training.

Participants rarely connected social work values to trans justice / trans oppression.

Cisnormative systems pose challenges to TNB affirming practicum education.

The relational dynamics and demands of maintaining relationships among agencies, students and academic institutions can complicate the ability of TNB students to obtain an affirming placement.

There is potential for practicum education to be a site of the enactment of professional values and trans equity.

(135) Resilience, Resistance, and Inclusive Integration of LGBTQ+ Newcomers in Newfoundland and Labrador: Challenges and Pathways to Support

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Introduction:

The Canadian government's commitment to accepting 1.45 million newcomers by 2025 aims to diversify Canada's population. While settlement organizations play a key role in supporting integration, they often fail to include marginalized communities, particularly LGBTQ+ newcomers. In Newfoundland and Labrador, LGBTQ+ newcomers are frequently excluded from settlement services, resulting in limited understanding of their needs. This exclusion is further compounded by the intersectionality of identities shaping their lived experiences of gender and sexuality.

Aim & Objectives:

This study examined the gaps in settlement services for LGBTQ+ newcomers in Newfoundland and Labrador. It aimed to understand how settlement organizations served LGBTQ+ newcomers, identify barriers to inclusion, and explore the intersectional factors that shaped their experiences.

Methods:

A mixed-method study was conducted, combining a survey and in-depth semi-structured interviews. Fourteen LGBTQ+ newcomers and three settlement/LGBTQ+ service providers participated. Thematic coding and data analysis identified key themes and patterns in the data.

Findings/Outcomes:

The study's findings revealed three key themes:

- (i) limited settlement services for LGBTQ+ newcomers,
- (ii) a lack of understanding among service providers of their specific needs,
- (iii) the need for continuity of care and support.

Discussion/Conclusion:

These findings highlight the importance of an intersectional approach to service provision, considering overlapping identities such as gender, sexuality, race, immigration status, and socio-economic background. Addressing exclusion and inequality requires the settlement sector to embrace activism and resistance in dismantling systemic barriers and ensuring LGBTQ+ newcomers' inclusion.

Implication(s) for Practice:

This study underscores the need for settlement organizations to adopt inclusive, intersectional practices that address the specific needs of LGBTQ+ newcomers. Service providers must enhance their understanding of challenges posed by intersecting identities. Policies and programs should prioritize continuity of care, LGBTQ+ inclusion, and resistance to exclusion. Implementing these changes will create more equitable environments and improve LGBTQ+ newcomers' integration.

(136) Searching for Meaning: Transgender and Non-Binary Experiences of Physical Education

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Aim & Objectives:

This research explores the reflective Physical Education (PE) experiences of transgender and non-binary (TNB) individuals (aged 19-33 years). The study focuses on how TNB individuals' (n= 5) experiences have impacted the meaning they attach to PE throughout schooling.

Methods:

A qualitative approach is used to explore their perceptions using semi-structured one-to-one interviews. The interview guide was designed with the meaningful PE (MPE) framework as a lens to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of PE.

Findings/Outcomes:

The findings demonstrate that TNB individuals are impacted by support, comfort, and perceptions of competence as they negotiate the space of PE. They infer how the changing rooms are a precarious space for them, with many acknowledging them as a site of much discomfort. In some instances, there is either a showing of support from the teachers, which keeps young people closer to the subject matter of PE, or an exclusionary approach, which encourages working on the periphery.

Discussion/Conclusion:

TNB individuals admit that to find meaning, they needed to experience PE in diverse ways that supported their identity more authentically. This included a consideration of the significance of relationships and support mechanisms between teachers and young people, breadth within the curriculum to enable competence, and choice within the spaces where young people find most discomfort.

Implication(s) for Practice:

The findings suggest implications for PE educators considering the importance of social interactions (teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil), challenge, and personally relevant learning to help support inclusive and meaningful experiences.

(139) Protocol for a Systematic Review on the Social Participation of People with Disabilities who Identify as LGBTQIA+

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Aim and objectives:

The current protocol for a systematic review will address the obstacles and facilitators to social participation among people with disabilities who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual, and people with other sexual orientations and forms of gender expression (LGBTQIA+).

Methods:

We will identify studies by searching electronic databases including MEDLINE (Ovid), APA PsycINFO (Ovid), Embase (Ovid), CINAHL Complete (EbscoHost) and Web of Science. We will also run grey literature searches of selected sources. The search strategy will be validated by two librarians according to the PRESS guideline Statement and include a range of text words and indexed terms related to social participation, disabilities, and sexual gender and diversity. All studies published from each database's date of inception through February 2025, regardless of language, will be eligible for inclusion. Studies will include different kinds of disabilities (e.g., motor, visual, auditory, intellectual, language, and cognitive disabilities). We will follow standard criteria for extraction using COVIDENCE software. Two reviewers using the MMAT tool will conduct screening, extraction, risk of bias and quality assessment independently.

Findings/Outcomes:

The information will be analyzed with a focus on the question of social participation in online and in-person interactions (e.g., work, education, healthcare, leisure, and community participation). Additional outcomes will include mental health, quality of life, social support, the development of additional and adapted services, and government actions to improve social participation.

Discussion/Conclusion:

This systematic review will provide essential information about different strategies to improve the social participation of people with disabilities who identify as LGBTQIA+.

Implication(s) for Practice:

Updating knowledge about barriers and facilitators can help clinicians to improve their practice and be mindful of the use of different strategies to advance the quality of life of people with disabilities in the context of sexual and gender diversity.

(140) "Stride Forward on Eggshells": Chinese Gay Men's Experience of Navigating Their Lives in New Zealand

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Symbolic erasure is a social consensus that refuses to acknowledge the existence and relationships of gay men, actively encouraging them to suppress or conceal their sexual identities. As a consequence, some Chinese gay men emigrate from the People's Republic of China to countries where same-sex rights and relationships are more welcomed and protected. Aotearoa New Zealand is one such destination, where same-sex marriage is legal and other rights are protected. However, the intersectionality of sexual and ethnic minority status forces Chinese gay men to continue to suppress and deny their sexual identity.

This research aims to raise social workers' awareness of the challenges and struggles faced by Chinese gay men (CGM) as new immigrants. It seeks to honour the narratives shared by Chinese gay men, celebrating their existence and revealing the power dynamics that continue to permeate society.

A qualitative research method was employed to capture the stories of six CGM, underpinned by the Strength-Based perspective to highlight the intricacies of navigating life in New Zealand—a place where sexuality is perceived to be celebrated and protected.

This research aims to contribute its unique insight and inject diverse perspectives about intersectionality into social work education and practice. Further research is needed to continue celebrating the authentic selves of other ethnic immigrant minority groups and to shed light on the consequential power disparities within New Zealand society.

(143) (Re)storying Sexuality in Social Work: A Collaborative, Dialogical, and Narrative Workshop

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Aim & Objectives:

This workshop invites participants to engage with sexuality in social work through collaborative, solution-focused, dialogical and narrative practises. Moving beyond static, normative or pathologising perspectives, the workshop explores sexuality as an evolving, relationally co-constructed experience that reflects emergent and dynamic aspects of personal and social identity. Participants will learn how to approach sexual narratives with curiosity, respect and narrative hospitality, and how to co-create alternative stories that promote agency, dignity and connection.

Methods:

Drawing on narrative practices, dialogical approaches and social constructionist epistemology and ethics, the workshop will use interactive and experiential methods: identifying dominant sexual discourses shaped by language, culture and power; exploring alternative narratives through “reauthoring conversations”; engaging in reflective and co-creative dialogue; mapping opportunities and constraints when talking about sexuality in professional contexts. These methods are based on examples from everyday life and allow participants to experience practises of externalisation, double listening and appreciation of untold stories.

Outcomes

Participants receive practical tools for dealing with sexual concerns in a way that centres the client's voice and lived experience. The workshop will increase professionals' sensitivity to power, discourse and identity in conversations about sexuality and support the development of more inclusive, affirming and dialogue-based practise. Particular attention will be paid to the ethics of not-knowing, narrative co-construction and relational responsibility.

Conclusion

The workshop contributes to a reorientation of social work practise towards a fluid, plural and empowering approach to sexuality. By embodying postmodern collaborative approaches, participants are invited to transform their professional responses into spaces of recognition, creativity and mutual learning. The workshop will also provide space for critical reflection and collegial exchange on the integration of these approaches into daily practise.

(144) Changes in Partnership and Sexuality in Persons with Acquired Brain Injury

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The consequences of ABI in connection with partnership and sexuality affect the field of physical, cognitive, emotional, behavioral and social person changes.

The functioning of a person with ABI in the mentioned area may change after injury, depending on the developmental period in which the ABI occurred and how intense, what type of brain injury it is.

The mentioned areas are also influenced by the personality, temperament and character of both partners, the social environment and the experience of the situation by other family members, friends and others; support of the partner, environment, and their interaction, quality and length of the partnership, past experience, how to accept and deal with the consequences of ABI parental role.

The partnership may be terminated / dissolved due to ABI. This can be influenced by hypersexuality, hyposexuality, sexual avoidance, increased interest in other potential partners, increased dependence in the relationship, inability sexual intercourse, emotional changes ...

The contribution will present a case study of users of the Center KORAK which provides long-term rehabilitation for people with ABI. A case study has found that difficulties in finding a partner are influenced by social isolation, the degree and type of brain injury, feelings of low self-esteem and self-image. Person with ABI can experience the change of family roles or even lose.

Interventions: psychologist helps to accept changed and new social roles and relationships in the family, training users and learning social skills, using appropriate communications and social behavior. The psychologist performs psychoeducation for users. Interventions can also involve other stakeholders (partner, family), help in accepting the consequences of ABI also in the field of family, partnership, sexuality.

Sexuality, partnership and family encroach on a very intimate area of human dignity. These areas are addressed with high sensitivity and protection of the dignity of all stakeholders.

(146) Transforming health and social care education and training: Creating culturally competent LGBT+ inclusive care

Alfonso Pezzella¹

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Introduction:

Discrimination and lack of awareness of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender plus (LGBT+) people in health and social care continue to exist across the globe. This indicates the need to ensure that health and social care professional education must include exploration of LGBT+ issues in order to enable professionals to provide culturally competent and compassionate care which is free from prejudice to this population.

Methodology:

IENE 9, an Erasmus+ funded project, adopted a mixed-method and innovative approach for gathering and developing teaching tools and resources for a more culturally competent and compassionate LGBT+ education in health and social care which was delivered by a MOOC.

Results:

There seems to be a lack of coverage of LGBT+ health needs in the health and social care curriculum across Europe. The project attempted to address this gap by delivering a MOOC to 875 people across the globe.

Discussion:

Specific training on LGBT+ issues may result in better knowledge and skills of the health and social care workforce, which helps to reduce inequalities and communication between providers and LGBT+ people, as well as diminish the feelings of stigma and discrimination experienced by LGBTQ+ people.

Implications for practice:

This presentation looks at equality and diversity from a culturally competent and compassionate viewpoint, and it demonstrates the high quality of collaboration across countries to improve the lives of marginalised and minority groups.

(148) Queer Necropolitics and Reviewing LGBTQ+ Lives and Deaths in English Safeguarding Work

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Aims and Objectives:

This presentation considers English safeguarding practices with LGBTQ+ adults who have care and support needs and have experienced abuse. Where an adult dies in the context of abuse, deaths are examined in statutory reports called safeguarding adult reviews (SARs), which are commissioned when the multi-agency network could have worked more effectively and preventatively. 'Queer necro-politics' draws on the work of Mbembe and considers the extent to which LGBTQ+ lives are valued and supported or framed as less legitimate.

Methods:

23 SARs on LGBTQ+ deaths were identified via a national repository of over 800 English reviews between 2016-2024 and analysed. Further insight was developed through focus group discussions with 13 SAR authors.

Findings:

The reviews and focus groups highlight the hidden qualities of LGBTQ+ lives and the prevalence of mental distress, social isolation and identity-related 'struggle'. Whilst potentially important, these deficits arose as assumptions about queer lives and deaths. Professional help was critiqued in relation to biases and discrimination and a lack of enquiry regarding sexual and gender identity.

Analysis:

Queer necro-politics challenges us to confront our profession's effectively engagement with sexual and gender identity and works affirmatively to prevent the abuse of LGBTQ+ individuals. Evidence about poor recognition of abuse, poor enquiry skills and simplistic assumptions suggests a problem concerning the value afforded to queer lives.

Practice Implications:

Safeguarding work at its best should support people to recover following experiences of abuse or neglect and to promote strengths, resilience and promote the value of a liveable life. The evidence from this study suggests that more work is required to engage the safeguarding sector around affirmative practice and address implicit biases that can prevent the identification of abuse and effective support for individuals who are LGBTQ+.

(149) Intersectionality in Intimacy - Age, Class & Ability

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Social work is a profession deeply concerned with the wellbeing of people, promotion of social justice, the importance of human relationships using a nonjudgmental stance, yet it remains reluctant to embrace positive sexuality in general, and with older adults in particular. This presentation highlights the lack of sexuality training within social work education programs and reluctance of social work to embrace a positive sexuality approach. The presenter will provide examples of older adults and intimacy, specifically in long term care settings and actively engage participants by discussing how social work, despite its rather outdated approach to sexuality, is naturally positioned to incorporate a positive sexuality approach inclusive of intersectional realities of class, race, ability, and age. References to the film "Still Doing It" <https://www.newday.com/films/still-doing-it-the-intimate-lives-of-women-over-65> will be identified and discussed.

(150) Upholding the values and principles of social work in a hostile environment: focusing on the experience of LGBTQI+ forced migrants and the UK policies and practices that shape their lives.

Dawn River¹

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This presentation focuses on findings from our recent study – Queer Experiences of Forced Migration and Sexual and Gender-based Violence: UK findings from the SEREDA project – which explores the experiences of LGBTQI+ forced migrants and the policies and practices impacting their lives across the four nations of the U.K. Given these findings, we ask - how do we uphold our social work values and ethical principles in a hostile environment?

We celebrated World Social Work Day with an international online student conference showcasing presentations from across the world. Our diverse U.K. student group, studying at a University of Sanctuary in a multi-cultural City of Sanctuary, chose to focus on the challenge of upholding a commitment to human rights and social justice and the empowerment and liberation of those seeking refuge and asylum in the UK. Recognising that principles of social justice, human rights and respect for diverse communities are central to social work, the students wanted to discuss ways of upholding these principles within a context where legislation (such as the Illegal Immigration Act 2023 and No Recourse to Public Funds, as set out in the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999) created a hostile environment and limited the support social workers could provide.

Having completed a module on Identity, Citizenship, International Issues and Anti-oppressive Social Work Practice, students understood that hostility towards refugees and asylum seekers existed in many different forms and for many different reasons. Exploring the research on forced migration and sexual and gender-based violence and listening to the experiences of queer asylum seekers with lived experience of homophobic violence and abuse, enabled a deeper understanding of these complex intersectional issues. This more complex understanding gave rise to the question – how can social workers practice according to our ethical value base within such a hostile environment?

(152) LGBTQ+ in Social Work Education: Between Activism, Practice and Theory

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Aim & Objectives:

The aim of this contribution is to present the development of education in the area of the LGBTQ+ issues at the Faculty of Social Work through the course “LGBTQ+ Perspectives in Social Work” at the Master's level. The second aim is to evaluate the experiences of the last three generations of students in relation to the knowledge and skills that they have acquired in the course.

Methods:

The answers to our questions concerning the students' experiences were obtained by analysing the combined data from: the three focus groups of students who have completed the course (one group in each generation), the oral group evaluation at the end of the course, the evaluation of their knowledge acquired as a component of their final essay, standardised student surveys. We were interested in their experiences before, during and after the course.

Findings/Outcomes:

The students evaluated the course highly, more particularly the approaches to teaching, which involved not only the standard teaching methods, but also the participation of activists, visits to events, working in small groups on social work cases, dialogical approach. They developed an understanding that the intersectionality is the key to understanding otherwise heterogeneous group of people. The participants with a lower degree of prior knowledge have more clearly noticed the changes in their perceptions, such as a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ people, and breaking down of their own prejudices. They also equipped themselves with the arguments for confronting prejudice in their own contexts.

Discussion/Conclusion:

The knowledge and skills developed in the course are essential tools for work with LGBTQ+ people in practice. The teachers, who during the course also reflect on their own position as members of the LGBTQ+ community, see their involvement on a spectrum ranging from activism to pedagogical and scientific engagement.

(153) Queer Temporality & Academic Social Work in the United States: Applications within Teaching, Scholarship, and Service

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Introduction:

In the United States, neoliberal ideologies increasingly structure higher education, centering productivity, managerialism, and competition. Concomitantly, coordinated efforts by the current presidential administration to ban diversity, equity, and inclusion – core values of the American social work profession – and to censor related scholarship have introduced fear, uncertainty, and material disruptions to social work education. These conditions produce profound demands on the time, energy, and attention of social work educators, with as yet unexamined effects on well-being, social work training, and the knowledge base of the profession.

Aims & Objectives:

This conceptual paper aims to theorize and apply core constructs of queer temporality literature to reimagine how social work scholars can respond to these demands within the three pillars of higher education: teaching, scholarship, and service.

Methods:

This paper draws upon the research and lived experience of social work scholars and graduate students affiliated with an LGBTQ+ research and advocacy center at a public research university in the Midwestern U.S. The authors review and synthesize scholarship on queer temporality, queer theory, and social work pedagogy to theorize new ways to navigate current crises in academic social work.

Findings/Outcomes:

Our analysis suggests that the application of queer temporality to academic social work can translate not only to a slower, more intentional pace of teaching, scholarship, and service, but to greater fluidity, multiplicity, and relationality.

Discussion/Conclusions:

We argue that this temporal reorientation can improve and transform social work scholars' practice, fostering increased multidisciplinary, expanding the knowledge base of the profession, and strengthening relationships between social work educators, students, and communities of practice.

Implications for Practice:

This analysis includes direct implications for practice, through attention to the training of social work practitioners, and invites further consideration of the temporalities of social work practice – especially in moments of crisis and social upheaval.

(155) Does it takes a Mother to Make a Family?: The Experiences of Children of Gay Fathers Born Through Surrogacy

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The absence of a maternal figure, often deemed essential to a child's development, raises concerns about the parenting abilities of gay fathers, which are particularly heightened when the child is born through surrogacy. While some studies have explored the development of children born via surrogacy and the quality of parent-child relationships, few have employed a qualitative approach centered on children's own experiences. The present research aims to fill this gap and contribute to the broader discussions surrounding surrogacy.

This exploratory qualitative research investigates representations of family and motherhood among Canadian and French children of gay fathers born through surrogacy. Using a child-centered epistemological approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 19 participants aged 5 to 18. Findings indicate that these children understand and articulate the circumstances of their birth, as well as their kinship to the woman who carried them. While their representations of family and motherhood are found to be similar across both countries, a discrepancy emerges in the social realm. Specifically, French children report experiencing homophobia and heterosexism with greater frequency. These findings highlight the influence of the social context on children's lived experiences and underscore the necessity of incorporating this factor into the discussions, while also emphasizing the need to continue exploring the diversity of experiences.

In several countries, surrogacy is examined through ethical lenses, with a focus on the children's well-being. Although the best interests of the children remain a central concern in the discourse, their voices are conspicuously absent. The Verona Principles, a set of guidelines established to safeguard the children's well-being, underscores the significance of pre-surrogacy counseling for all parties involved. In this context, our findings can inform counseling practices, ensuring they address the realities and experiences of children born through surrogacy, and fostering psychosocial services that genuinely uphold the best interests of the child.

(157) The Impact of Sexual Identity Development on Young Adults' Sexual Well-Being

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Introduction:

Developmental theories suggest that developing a positive and coherent sexual identity is critical to sexual well-being, itself an important aspect of overall well-being. Sexual identity development, however, is not a singular process, instead consisting of several dimensions, each of which may affect well-being differently.

Aims and Objectives:

This research evaluated the impact of four dimensions of sexual identity development on nine aspects of sexual well-being.

Methods:

219 former foster youth (ages 18-24) completed an online survey that included two multidimensional scales, one for sexual identity development and one for sexual well-being. Participants identified mostly as female (59.4%), a racial or ethnic minority (60.3%), and heterosexual (77.2%). Regression models examined the association between nine dimensions of sexual well-being on each of four dimensions of sexual identity development (Exploration, Commitment, Synthesis/Integration, and Sexual Orientation Identity Uncertainty). Models controlled for sex assigned at birth, sexual orientation identity, and race and ethnicity.

Results:

Sexual identity commitment was negatively associated with sexual esteem ($\beta = -0.16$, $p = .014$) and sexual anxiety ($\beta = -0.25$, $p < .001$). Sexual identity exploration was positively associated with relationship quality ($\beta = 0.40$, $p < .001$) and sexual self-esteem ($\beta = 0.19$, $p = .012$) but negatively associated with sexual satisfaction ($\beta = -0.24$, $p = .014$). Sexual orientation identity uncertainty was negatively associated with sexual self-esteem ($\beta = -0.21$, $p = .005$). Sexual identity synthesis/integration was positively associated with sexual self-esteem ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < .001$), but negatively associated with sexual pain ($\beta = -0.19$, $p = .009$).

Discussion:

These results indicate that sexual identity development is important to sexual well-being and that dimensions of sexual identity development have differing impacts on sexual well-being. Of particular importance is that all dimensions impacted individuals' sexual self-esteem, itself a critical piece of how individuals interpret and understand their sexual selves.

Implication(s) for Practice:

Sexuality is an often-neglected component of social work practice. These data further emphasize the importance of considering sexual development when seeking to enhance clients' well-being.

(158) Using Minority Stress Theory to Understand Progression Toward Self-Acceptance Among Gay Men Raised within the Pentecostal Church

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Introduction:

Nearly half of the LGBT adults in the United States are religious, with the majority being a part of a Protestant church. Among Protestant denominations, the Pentecostal church is particularly known for its condemnation of homosexuality. Gay men raised within the Pentecostal tradition often struggle to reconcile their gay identity with their religious upbringing.

Aims and Objectives:

This research sought to understand the experiences of gay men raised within Pentecostal churches and their path toward self-reconciliation and wholeness.

Methods:

Six gay men raised within the Pentecostal tradition within the United States participated in semi-structured interviews focused on how the traditions within which they were raised affected their path toward understanding themselves holistically. Interview transcripts were analyzed in an iterative fashion following constructivist grounded theory methodology.

Findings/Outcomes:

Three themes were identified, Embracing the Journey, which encompassed the participants' lived experiences as they processed their painful experiences; Belonging to a Community, which consisted of their pursuit of social connection and a community within which they felt safe; and Living Unapologetically, which reflected their resilience as they sought to find their voice and transform negative self-images created during childhood.

Discussion:

The participants' stories encompassed the four layers Minority Stress Theory, social structures (the Pentecostal tradition), social experiences within the structure, translation of their experiences toward their internal selves, and the need to rely on intrapersonal factors to effect personal growth. The identified themes suggested a process through which they addressed each layer as they worked through their painful experiences.

Implication(s) for Practice:

Many gay men have painful childhood experiences that require processing as they seek wholeness during adulthood. Clinical practices that counter socially-based personal stressors such as relational-cultural theory-based interventions, narrative therapy, and reconstructive bibliotherapy may be particularly helpful for clients as they move toward reconciling their identities with harmful past experiences.

(159) (De)trans Discourses: Crossing Media, Professionals and Detrans Youth Narratives on Detransition

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Aim:

In recent years, media coverage of young people who interrupt their gender transition (“detransition”) have increased. Often framed through a gender-critical lens, these narratives emphasize regret and error, portraying gender-affirming care as too permissive and leading to unnecessary transitions and subsequent regrets. These narratives fuel policies restricting youth access to gender-affirming care. To date, the UK, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, 26 states of the USA and the province of Alberta in Canada have banned access to puberty blockers for minors. This presentation compares the perspectives of media, detrans youth, and trans health professionals on detransition.

Methods:

In 2020, we launched a 3-pronged study analyzing discourses on detransition to better understand and define this phenomenon. First, we examined 192 international press articles on detransition (2017–2020). Second, we surveyed 61 professionals working with trans youth, 39 of whom had encountered detransitioning youth. Third, we conducted 25 interviews with detrans youth (2020–2022). This presentation will put them into dialogue.

Findings:

Our findings reveal that, despite media portrayals of detransition as a heterogeneous phenomenon, experiences vary widely. While professionals report diverse reasons for detransitioning, young people themselves describe complex, individualized journeys.

Conclusion:

Bringing those perspectives in dialogue allows to challenge dominant narratives by showing that media narratives are often only portraying a subset of youth who detransition. It also allows to understand better understand how complex are their experiences, and to provide a nuanced understanding of detransition.

Implication:

Drawing from an evidence base perspective, Social workers can support gender diverse youth including those who detransition, by providing gender affirming services and safer space. They can also play a role in challenging misconceptions and advocating for inclusive policies.

(160) The Social Geography of Fear and Acceptance: Older Adults' Perspectives on LGBQ in Residential Aged Care

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Introduction:

Residential Aged Care (RAC) represents a unique environment where older adults from diverse backgrounds, who may not have otherwise chosen to share their daily lives, coexist. This setting becomes a space where social norms, identities, and attitudes intersect, shaping the experiences of its residents. For older adults identifying within the LGBQ acronym, RAC can present both challenges and opportunities in terms of visibility, safety, and belonging. However, it is not only the experiences of LGBQ individuals that shape these environments, the attitudes, behaviours, and interactions of other residents also play a crucial role in RAC.

Aim & Objectives:

The study aims to explore how spaces within RAC are shaped concerning older LGBQ adults, focusing on the factors that contribute to perceptions of safety, inclusion, and exclusion.

Methods:

A qualitative approach was employed, using semi-structured interviews with 17 residents living in RAC facilities in Sweden. The sample included both individuals who identified within the LGBQ acronym and those who did not. Data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis to identify key patterns and themes related to identity, space, and social dynamics within RAC.

Findings/Outcomes:

The findings reveal that RAC functions as a distinct social space where older adults navigate complex interpersonal dynamics shaped by heteronormative norms and power structures. Participants described how assumptions about sexuality often went unquestioned, contributing to the invisibility of LGBQ identities.

Discussion/Conclusion:

Drawing on the geography of fear, the study illustrates how LGBQ individuals manage feelings of vulnerability through strategies of avoidance, adaptation, or resistance, while non-LGBQ residents contribute to shaping these dynamics through their attitudes and behaviours.

Implications for Practice:

While much of the existing research emphasises the need for staff training and attitude changes to improve inclusivity, this study suggests the importance of also considering structural solutions.

(163) It's Our Nature to Love: The Lives of Polyamorous People in a Mononormative Society

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Aim & Objectives:

Although the term and practice of polyamory have existed for over 50 years in the Western world, research on polyamory in Slovene social work research is non-existent and generally underrepresented in academia. The presentation shows findings from an explorative study that examined the lives of polyamorous individuals within a mononormative context. The aim was to understand how the interviewees self-define polyamory, what their lives and life trajectories look like, how the process of coming out unfolds, and what everyday needs they express regarding public services.

Methods:

A qualitative research method utilizing semi-structured interviews, conducted with thirteen residents of Slovenia who identify as polyamorous was conducted. Transcribed interviews were thematically analysed.

Findings/Outcomes:

Interviewees associate polyamory with loving multiple people, freedom, personal growth, and effective communication. Many practiced polyamory prior to knowing the term, often experiencing guilt and challenges in monogamous relationships. Polyamorous relationships are diverse, with partners often knowing and forming friendships within the polycule. Challenges interviewees reported were a lack of communities, social judgement and pathologisation in psychosocial support.

Conclusion:

Slovene interviews revealed findings that align with existing theories and research. While polyamory is conceptually cohesive in its philosophy and ethics, it can manifest in various forms and differ among individuals. There is potential for further exploration regarding the status of polyamory in Slovenia and the necessary adaptations in the education and social welfare system.

Implications for practice:

Psychotherapists, psychologists, and social workers should receive training and therefore enhance their understanding of polyamory to avoid pathologizing clients and provide them with better support. There is a need for legal recognition and inclusion of polyamory in social policies. Developing polyamorous communities and peer support networks is essential to reduce stigma and enhance well-being. Additional studies are needed to explore the intersection of polyamory, social work, and legal frameworks.

(164) A lack of structure on LGBTQ+ affirmative themes in higher education programs for human service and healthcare professions in the Nordic countries

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Aim & Objectives:

This review aims to map out the current situation of how LGBTQ+ themes are being raised in higher education programs for human service and healthcare professions in the Nordic countries. It aims to identify gaps in knowledge among teachers and students as well as identify good examples of LGBTQ+ affirmative practice in the Nordic context.

Methods:

A scoping review of literature published in English, Danish, Finnish, Icelandic, Norwegian and Swedish since 2010 was conducted using Scopus, EbsCo and Proquest, Pubmed and Cinahl. A key term strategy was employed using e.g. "LGBTQ", "education", "social work", "healthcare" and "competencies" to identify relevant studies. Additional research was identified through the Nordic network of LGBTI research on health and living conditions.

Findings:

Initial findings suggest there is a lack of LGBTQ+ themes raised in higher education programs for human service and healthcare professions in the Nordic countries. Current teaching in healthcare often applies a risk focus on e.g. STIs where LGBTQ+ individuals are conceptualized as a risk group. Furthermore, LGBTQ+ youth is circled as a risk group in connection to youth vulnerabilities in social work education. Good examples of affirmative practice are mostly related to NGO's or individual efforts and lack structure within programs.

Conclusion:

Findings suggest a lack of structured education on LGBTQ+ themes in higher education programs for human service and healthcare professions, which leads to a lack of comprehensive competencies among professionals in the field

Implication(s) for Practice:

This research implicates a need for structured, research-based education for human service and healthcare professions on LGBTQ+ themes that survive without individual efforts and without relying on local NGO's for addressing these issues. The results will be used to build a Nordic digital curriculum on LGBTQ+ competencies for human service professionals and students.

(165) Gender Diversity Training through Expressive Arts Approach

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Despite rising international concerns on trans/transgender people' experiences in education and health care services, current transprejudice and genderism has almost silenced the discussion in Hong Kong social service and education context due to non-existent legal ordinance or education to prevent transphobia and transprejudice in social welfare systems and schools. For instance, the suggested legal reform of anti-discrimination law, that should be based on gender identity has met with strong opposition from cultural forces. There is no mandated training, both at the pre-service and in-service level for social workers and educators on gender diversity issues. Reducing transgender prejudices is key to social justice, an important value in social work education, and in an inclusive society. In previous studies, the use of expressive arts strategies as training tools can provide cultural and emotional context for multifaceted social health issues, such as reducing prejudice towards marginalized and oppressed groups. As such, integration of expressive art forms in professional training workshops for teachers and social work students can provide important context for understanding gender diversity and social justice issues.

The research question in this study was to explore how expressive arts strategies can help participants in gender diversity training workshop building empathy and understanding on transgender and social justice issues. A qualitative approach was used to understand 112 participants' awareness and knowledge on transgender and social justice issues through qualitative data collection and qualitative descriptive analysis, after attending specially designed training workshops.

The results yielded the following themes: 1) Challenging cultural taboos; 2) Connecting hearts; 3) Expressing emotions; 4) Transforming attitudes; 5) Expanding worldviews. To summarize, this study indicated that professional training using expressive arts approach enhanced participants' empathy and understanding of gender diversity, as well as cultivated discussion on new framework or strategies in contesting transgender health disparities.

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