International Gender for Excellence In Research Conference Proceedings

Selected Papers and Abstracts

Edited by

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Part 2

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Group photo from conference (by Deniz Altuntas)

Preface

This book is one of the outcomes of the Horizon 2020 EU project *Gender for Excellence in Research* (GenderEx). This project has promoted the awareness of gender amongst researchers and the application of gender theory across a range of disciplines. The present book consists of the proceedings from the Second International Gender for Excellence in Research Conference, in which research projects from a variety of disciplines were presented, including social sciences, humanities, engineering and physical sciences. The research demonstrates how gender theory can contribute to expanding scientific knowledge. This project also appeals to the turn in academia towards interdisciplinarity by challenging the ways in which academic knowledge is produced.

The editors of this book would like to thank all of the conference participants, the staff of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Research Group, Kadir Has University, Istanbul and all the members of the GenderEx Team, for their contributions to the Second Gender for Excellence in Research Conference. A special thanks to the gender-sensitive language editor Liz Sourbut, and to Jonas Palm and his colleagues at the Media Tryck printing office of Lund University.

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Introduction

This book collection is part of the GenderEx project, funded by Horizon 2020, which is a three-year project designed to build networks, exchange knowledge and engage in best practices. The goal is to stimulate the integration of the Sex and Gender Dimension in Research Content, between the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Research Group at Kadir Has University in Turkey and three internationally recognized partners in this area: Lund University (Sweden), the University of Genoa (Italy), and Technological University Dublin (Ireland).

The papers and abstracts collected here were presented at the Second International Gender for Excellence in Research Conference, held on 10–11 June 2023, at Kadir Has University in Istanbul, Turkey. They make clear the wide range of subjects into which individuals are integrating a sex/gender perspective. The conference was the second in a series initiated by the First International Gender for Excellence in Research Conference (Thompson et al., 2023).

GenderEx embodies an intersectional approach that recognizes a multiplicity of identities and the reality that gender is embedded in intertwined systems of difference and power. GenderEx embraces intersections of gender and aspects such as sexual orientation, race, class, religion and abilities and the ways in which these categories mutually construct identities. Although gender studies as an academic field is well established, gender dimensions in all aspects of academic research are absent far too often. This perpetuates the biased orientation of academia, its production and its structures of power. The importance of the gender dimension derives from the ways in which it illuminates the gendered mechanisms that generate inequalities. It is also clear that it opens up new areas of academic research and innovation.

Following the European Research Area for Gender Equality, GenderEx aims to 'better integrate the gender dimension in projects to improve research quality as well as the relevance to society of the knowledge, technologies and innovations produced' (European Research Area, 2020, n.p.). Its primary focus is on Turkey, where the scientific gaps in this area are prominent. Furthermore, an intersectional gender analysis obliges researchers to question stereotypes and norms to ensure that research addresses the realities of all individuals, regardless of their identity. Research that ignores intersectional analyses is often incomplete and biased, which leads to the formulation of inadequate policies, programmes, theories, outcomes etc. Therefore, researchers need greater awareness of the importance and benefits of integrating critical gender and diversity analyses into their work. Studies have shown that the lack of a gender

dimension in research design, implementation and organization may undermine scientific excellence and creativity, and reduce a project's benefits for society, and that gender inequalities have influenced the outcomes of research on a large scale. Introducing awareness of gender issues helps prevent bias, as well as generating better quality results (League of European Research Universities, 2018, 2019; European Commission, 2021). To overcome gender bias in science and technology, simply adding women, while important, is not enough. The integration of gender and diversity dimensions should be implemented throughout the entire process of basic and applied research. This includes priority setting, funding decisions, establishing project objectives and methodologies, data collection, evaluating results and applying ideas.

Visibility in academia is a significant aspect of attracting opportunities for funding, and this is particularly true for early-stage researchers who are near the beginning of their careers. For this reason, the GenderEx project has hosted two international conferences to create a platform for these researchers to share their research with a wider audience, gain the opportunity to network with peers and established scholars and receive feedback on their work. The diversity of papers presented at the conference demonstrates both the added value that a gender and diversity perspective can bring and also the importance of ensuring that such a perspective is taken into consideration whatever the subject.

The contributions are organized into three sections:

- keynote papers from the first and second conferences,
- peer-reviewed papers from the second conference, and
- abstracts from the second conference by authors selecting not to present full papers here.

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Section 1: Selected Papers

Keynote talk: Gender is power in situated practices: Notes on entanglements

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Introduction

These notes offer some speculations on the impacts of gender and feminist theory on activisms and politics, including public policies. Speculation seems to be almost inappropriate in this era of evidence-based knowledge, a new name for positivism. Since we are dealing with theoretical and political subjects, our inquiry here will take the shape of speculation on the limits of gender and sex in situated practices and knowledges. How is it possible to consider gender and not recognize in the analysis the shapes that race has given to gender? Or the materiality that class relations impose on considering gender? But also how can we understand race without using gender as a possible locus of intersected racialization? Or class, for that matter? Here, I am considering ideas on gender theories and how they impact upon activism and social policies, revealing the pitfalls and traps of liberal state feminism. The first section maps and signals some proposals focusing on the idea that gender is constituted as materiality and not as a social construction. Judith Butler's (1990, 1993) theory of gender performativity is employed to show how matter and signification are used in this process of creating gendered subjects, who perform, repeat and thus generate the effects of gender that are naturalized as sex.

In the second section, I draw upon intersectionality and its uses to show how some forms of feminism – such as liberal state feminism and neoliberal feminisms – are depoliticizing the concept by transforming it into a methodology. I argue here that such uses of intersectionality are misguided in the sense that they promote a vision of this epistemology as being only a methodological and statistical artefact. Intersectionality is part of a project of social change that includes politics and the ethics of social justice and collective struggle to eradicate discrimination that provide scaffolding to one another. I use examples from the European Institute for Gender Equality, showing how this combination of liberal feminism and state feminism – I am hyphenating both

together into liberal-state feminism here in its Euro form – creates the perfect conditions for depoliticizing intersectionality. They appropriate a way of thinking that is characteristic of and present in black feminist thought (Collins and Bilge, 2016), in order to tame it within the Eurocentric white feminist practice – liberal, colonial, carceral and classist. There is also a vital need to figure deaths – social, de facto and symbolic – besides biopolitics and in the field of necropower (Mbembe, 2019) in order to understand the effects of these matrices of power, such as racism. Abolition feminism (no connection with TERF abolitionists) is expanding notions of justice, rethinking the relation with security forces and showing the connection between carceral systems and slavery. It is of great importance to rethink feminisms from these perspectives if we are to reimagine and remake the antropocenic/capitolecenic world (Haraway, 2016).

In the last section, some feminist efforts are highlighted to illustrate the tensions between these variegated forms of feminism. I focus on examples that are based on the struggle of intersectional feminisms for global social justice and on feminisms that are invested in expanding the notion of care. The need for an explicitly situated intersectionality using social positions and matrices of power is emphasized, drawing upon the work of Nira Yuval-Davis (2015).

Expanding a radical notion of care that can be universalized and not only viewed as something done by women, is the focus of recent work developed by the Care Collective (2020) and Lynne Segal (2023), among others. This way of thinking about the expansion of care as a mandate for collective struggles is founded on the idea of a shared vulnerability (Butler, 2015) that can be used for political action and to build coalitions. These vulnerabilities are personal and global, pertaining to micro, meso and macro levels of care, and require us to expand our notions of politics. On the other hand, using intersectionality to focus on entanglements, implies for instance looking at racism (and gender), not from the perspective of (psychosocial) prejudice or from a single institutional take. Racism also allows the state to be violent, and this mandate of violence is widespread within societies. Gender is also understood as a fundamental part of this structure of domination, being both used by and using racism and racialisation. Therefore, it is vital to think these entanglements through matrices of power.

Gender is not socially constructed: Gender matters

This essay seeks to provide a view on gender as a situated practice, using the epistemology of situated knowledges (Haraway, 1988) as a viewpoint on feminist theory that challenges universalist and single-issue explanations. These universalist views reinforce sexual difference as the means by which gender becomes installed at the heart of contemporary societies. They also tend to reinforce an individualistic vision of

gender: each individual *has* a gender and such gender is homologous to sex (as criticized by Amância and Oliveira, 2006). Despite its social constitution, gender is viewed as being simultaneously a property of the individual being, a descriptor of population (e.g.: men, women) and an identity or a form of identification for the subject and for the intelligibility of that subject within the social world. The multipurpose nature of gender, framed in discrete categories that are to be used by the general population, makes it more difficult to extricate from its several meanings and effects in the context of societies that are very oriented around the cisnormative (Ansara and Hegarty, 2012) and heteronormative (Warner, 1993 logic of Western concepts of gender.

The complexity of these categories is partially explored in questionnaires and scales that provide answer options that depict highly charged political categories of women and men as though they are natural and obvious descriptions of the population. Quantitative methods aimed at producing quick and undetailed views of certain social and economic aspects frame it dualistically: male and female, or women and men. Needless to say, these views generate an opacity around categories such as trans*, non-binary and other forms of gender expression. But the mere inclusion of other options in the list of answers does not include the nuances and possible resignifications that social groups, societies and experiences of gender bring to these categories. Therefore there are limits to the statistics and to the production of scientific proof using only quantitative methods.

In public policy, and especially in the diagnosis of the various layers of institutional barriers to gender equality or mainstreaming, the reliance on statistical methods and body count is widespread. While I am not totally denying the relevance of using these body counts, they are usually an impoverished way of understanding the modalities of gender variations and of the way in which gender comes to signify a form of social norms that guide the process of intelligibility. So, in a sense, the portrait they offer is based on the assumptions that gender is a property of the individual, that gender as a descriptor (of a population) is an indicator of the gender dynamics and that these indicators never change. Looking from another angle, these conceptualizations are used as truth regimes of gender and gender experiences. Frequently, politics, and especially public policies, reinforce such views. Take this example from the European Institute for Gender Equality EIGE) and its glossary (via its website) of terminology:

> Sex refers to the biological characteristics which define humans as female or male. These sets of biological characteristics are not mutually exclusive as there are individuals who possess both, but these characteristics tend to differentiate humans as males and females. (EIGE, 2016)

Here, again, we see sexual dimorphism taken as the basis for a biological nature of quasi-gender. Males and females are deemed to be such based on biological characteristics. This impoverished vision of sex was already being contested by the biologist Anne Fausto-Sterling in her 1985 (!) *Myths of Gender* (Fausto-Sterling, 1985). In a more recent book, Fausto-Sterling (2012) discusses sex as having several layers. Distinguishing between chromosomal sex, foetal gonadal sex, foetal hormonal sex, internal reproductive sex and genital sex, she points out that these are layers of sex that do not always coincide. In addition, during development, other layers are added, including pubertal hormonal sex and pubertal morphological sex. But, more importantly, gender comes into play and signifies these different layers (Fausto-Sterling, 2012). Back to the EIGE definitions:

> Gender refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context/ time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context. Other important criteria for socio-cultural analysis include class, race, poverty level, ethnic group and age. (EIGE, 2016)

Again, the option chosen is to embrace a (weak) constructionist-driven and impoverished vision of gender. If we employ Judith Butler's (1990, 1993) work to rethink what gender does in the social world, this definition is at best a bad description of gender. In this section, I use Butler's work on gender performativity in a text from 1993, *Bodies that matter*, in order to show that a conception of gender performativity could help to improve political usages of gender and the deployment of gender in public policies.

Gender can be viewed from two different perspectives. We can go all the way back to Spinoza's philosophy (2007) to understand that power (yes, gender is always associated with power) is not only power of command. In Antonio Negri's (2013) reading of Spinoza's philosophy, power can best be described as dual-layered: the power to command, to subordinate, to be obeyed (*potestas*) and the power of potency (*potentia*), in relation to the world and to a possible action. A good example of the power of resistance would be Bartlebly, the scrivener, the eponymous character in a story by Hermann Melville, as described in Agamben's (1999) shrewd essay, in which the character of Bartleby refuses to act, invoking the principle of preferring not to. This

injunction is the pure potency of Bartleby's action in the world. He could have, if he had not preferred otherwise. This is a power associated with the *conatus*, the inclination to persevere in oneself. Butler's (1990) work on performativity discusses gender from both perspectives: compliance with gender norms, which could be associated with a more *potestas* dimension of gender, and the critical revisitations of such norms more associated with a dimension of gender we could conceive as *potentia*. But why would this discussion between philosophy, literature and gender studies help improve EIGE's definition?

Sex, for Butler (1993), is a regulatory ideal whose materialization takes place via highly regulated practices, producing the very body it is said to describe through the reiteration of the norm. It is not by chance that the child becomes invested as an object of extreme concern for conservatives. The child becomes an object of social ventriloquism for the conservatives speaking on behalf of the child's best interests (Butler, 2004) – confounded with their own views, of course. The domain of children's gender is highly valued by gender conservatives, with their mandate of protecting children from gender. The child is at once a symbol and a proof that biology rules supreme, but highly protected and regulated so that sex does its work. However, the work of sex is always already gender because, without the intelligibility of gender norms, that work would not be read as sex.

These highly regulated practices are also the focus of trans-exclusionary forms of feminism, with the boundary work done by these feminists serving the purpose of policing and controlling the borders of the category of woman (Hines, 2020). This policing of gender reveals the extreme anxiety provoked by expressions of gender that do not fit these policed and regulated practices. That these feminists end up doing the same dirty job that gender conservatives do says a lot about their political praxis. Old stories of political allegiances between anti-porn radical feminists and conservatives in the name of fighting pornography (Dymock, 2018) have scarred the movement and should provide a compelling warning. Reviving the old ghost of 'love your enemy', meaning men here, as the Leeds Revolutionary Feminist Group (1981) would say, they are ready to do the same with a confessed enemy: the conservatives. This time the alliance is with transphobic and openly antifeminist groups that use the idea of the ideology of gender to attack trans populations and feminists alike (Thurlow, 2022). These are the conservatives who have always been foes to feminism. Still, trans hate speech seems to unite these strange companions.

The same is true of SWERFs (Sex Worker-Exclusionary Radical Feminists – although perhaps the qualification 'radical' is not necessary here, since these feminists are very connected with liberal state feminisms, but I will leave it there, while noting this), who follow suit concerning the rights of sex workers, based on what they expound as a scale

of human dignity for middle-class white Euro and Anglo women. Most working-class women would not be able to fit such a scale, since not only do many people have jobs that do not satisfy them, but their work is exploited by capitalism and hence very badly paid. Not only do SWERFs police the borders of human dignity, but they also expect the police and security forces to provide protection to sex workers while enforcing the law. In countries such as Sweden, Norway, Iceland, France, Ireland, Northern Ireland and Canada, the laws criminalizing the clients of sex work are in fact contributing to the active exploitation of sex workers, because the demand does not go away and, in fact, sex work provides paid work for migrant and other vulnerable populations who would have numerous problems in seeking permission to enter their host country due to work visa issues (Stabile, 2000). The criminalization of clients has led to the hiding of sex work from view, it has allowed police persecution targeting clients but with sex workers as collateral, and has been detrimental to the security and health of sex workers. In addition, the fact that it becomes more dangerous for clients has decreased the prices of sex work, impoverishing already vulnerable populations, who are now exposed to greater jeopardy in order to provide their services. Amnesty International (2016, p. 6) has declared:

> Amnesty International considers that to protect the rights of sex workers, it is necessary not only to repeal laws which criminalize the sale of sex, but also to repeal those which make the buying of sex from consenting adults or the organization of sex work (such as prohibitions on renting premises for sex work) a criminal offence. Such laws force sex workers to operate covertly in ways that compromise their safety, prohibit actions that sex workers take to maximize their safety, and serve to deny sex workers support or protection from government officials. They therefore undermine a range of sex workers' human rights, including their rights to security of person, housing and health.

Alongside Amnesty International (2016), the Global Commission of HIV and the law (2012) has expressed reservations to the adoption of any forms of criminalization as harmful for the sex worker. Moreover, the Lancet has devoted an editorial (Lancet, 2023) to the debate in European Parliament encouraging the criminalisation of clients allover the EU, whitout considering the health of sex workers. This criminalization implies a higher exposition of sex workers to sexually transmitted infections and HIV and contributes to their exclusion from health, legal, economic and other social services, as expressed by the Lancet (2023) editorial.

The positions of SWERFs constitute class warfare, and indeed are xenophobic and racist since so many migrants and BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) populations resort to sex work as a way to earn a living, especially on arrival to the host country, and are thus disproportionally affected by these regulations, created in the

name of women's rights. This class warfare weaponry is in the hands of white middle-class feminists, who are in a better position to influence laws and social policies, keeping sex-work-related crimes in the civil codes. This is, of course, the effect of gender morality intertwined with gender norms, making the lives of both sex workers and trans populations even more vulnerable.

This shows that even (some) feminists are involved in this work of using gender norms to make the lives of women and other populations even more vulnerable, under the banner of women's rights. This femonationalism (Farris, 2017) can also be seen as an attack on a possible democracy of gender based not on abstract, reified and white middle-class ideas of gender equality, but on an actual, fully-fledged democracy of gender, which seeks a politics of interdependence and shared vulnerabilities. Following Lynne Segal's (2023) proposal for a 'lean on me' politics based on radical care and an admission of shared vulnerability and interdependence, these are absolutely vital if we are to overcome these situations, keeping sex workers and trans people out of the hands of the police, or of a repressive state committed to deportation and to getting rid of these populations, and of feminists who, under the banner of women's rights, help to increase their stigmatization.

These carceral forms of feminism are not the feminisms that interest me. Rather, I seek to focus on radical care feminisms, and feminism and anti-racist movements fighting incarceration (Davis et al., 2022), which is a prolongation of slavery and forced labour by other means. Nonetheless, some other feminists still indulge in helping the police to incarcerate more migrants, sex workers and racialized populations. These state-complicit feminisms, such as neoliberal forms of feminism (Rottenberg, 2020), SWERFs and TERFs, as well as much of state feminism and liberal feminism, are part of the problem of biopolitics and necropolitics. And certainly they are part of the gender border patrol.

Returning to the conceptualization of sex, we saw that sex is not simply a construction, but rather the materialization of norms and their regulatory effects, producing the very bodies they are said to describe. It is through the process of being sexed (by gender as a grid of intelligibility) that subjectivity/subjection is constituted. 'In this sense, the matrix of gender relations is prior to the emergence of the "human"' (Butler, 1993, p. 7).

Therefore, both the version of the willing subject who selects and chooses which gender they wish to be, and the version of a construction of gender that impedes any agency in the process, are to be discarded. These are conditions of cultural possibility of materialization that allow the possible resignifications and failed performances of gender – from the point of view of compliance with the norm. So thinking about

gender as a construction fails to grasp the full extent of the effects of performativity, how matrices of power constitute certain sexed bodies, making them possible culturally. The sex-worker body, the trans body, the multitude of monsters engendered by the resignifications of gender norms, are more transparent to the structures of discourse, technology and norms from which they become possible. These bodies all belong to a constitutive outside marked as abject. Social movements, however, have been struggling to produce a sort of resignification of gender norms in order to be intelligible and possess political agency. As Susan Stryker (1994, p. 251) points out eloquently:

> for we have done the hard work of constituting ourselves on our own terms, against the natural order. Though we forego the privilege of naturalness, we are not deterred, for we ally ourselves instead with the chaos and blackness from which Nature itself spills forth.

The denaturalization of gender offered by feminist and queer critique has been fundamental:

> Indeed, I would argue that it is a critique without which feminism loses its democratizing potential through refusing to engage – take stock of, and become transformed by – the exclusions which put it into play. (Butler, 1993, p. 29)

This citation from Butler makes a lot of sense even now in a world where some feminists, impervious to queer and trans critique, still dream of a feminism of women born women where trans women are not welcome. They do not realize how lethal such cis-supremacy dreams are for trans women, undoing them as women and exposing their mark of vulnerability when not even women support their existence as women. This hallmark of transphobic genocide, of making these bodies yet more unintelligible within the system of gender norms, means that liberal and state feminism are silent in their complicity with the overkill of transpeople, especially trans women. Berenice Bento (2016) talks about transfeminicide as a part of feminicide.

This is also evident in the harm done directly to sex workers by feminists who advocate for the abolition of sex work. This further stigmatizes their work as undignified when so many working-class people face jobs that are very badly paid and deeply exploited. There is no serious attempt to reverse this situation. SWERFs positions and the laws inspired by them have had a huge impact on the health (The Lancet, 2023) and well-being of sex workers, by forcing them to deal with the police, foreign office and incarceration, by persecuting their clients, and by turning their way of making a living into a illegal affair. SWERFs have directly harmed these women in the name of women's rights.

The performativity of gender implies other politics, other strategies of intervention in the political. Transforming gender norms is not simply a matter of abolishing them by decree or changing them. Norms are always instantiations of power, right from the start. This means they are more a theory of use than a theory of antagonizing power. Remembering Spinoza (Oliveira, 2016), power is not only command, but also potency. But potency is implicated in power. Therefore:

> Performativity describes this relation of being implicated in that which one opposes, this turning of power against itself to produce alternative modalities of power, to establish a kind of political contestation that is not a 'pure' opposition, a 'transcendence' of contemporary relations of power, but a difficult labor of forging a future from resources inevitably impure. (Butler, 1993, 241)

This is a theory of action that is not concerned with purity, but rather with producing certain effects. It is an act of affirmative sabotage (Spivak, 2012), by turning power against itself, the example being Fanon (2017) using Hegel's master and slave dialetics against Europe in the context of African decolonization: 'Fanon's lesson was that you use what the masters have developed and turn it around in the interests of those who have been enslaved or colonized' (Spivak, 2014, p. 61). So it is no longer an idea of a passive construction, but rather a strong idea of a performativity and materialization of gender in our bodies and in our social and cultural lives. Insisting upon the simple construction of gender keeps gender depoliticized, and without the vital resources needed for social change.

2- Gender is not a single-issue subject: Intersectionality and hyphenation

The work undertaken by black feminists, positioning intersectionality as a fundamental paradigm for research on gender studies, is pivotal for understanding the new political and scientific paradigms that have been developed for studying and thinking about discrimination and privilege. The work of Patricia Hill Collins (2008) is very useful here, because it perceives intersectionality from the perspective of power relations. Black feminist thought has been pivotal in never avoiding studying how power operates in the interstices of categories. These are not monolithic or discrete categories, but rather porous and diffracted, to use Haraway's (2004) conceptualization. This rethinking of categories is vital, positioning the interplay between them as fundamental to understanding the dynamics of discrimination. Therefore, intersectionality is key to understanding how multiple forms of discrimination interact and generate specific effects on specific social positions:

> Intersectionality as an analytic tool examines how power relations are intertwined and mutually constructing. Race, class, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, ethnicity, nation, religion, and age are categories of analysis, terms that reference important social divisions. But they are also categories that gain meaning from power relations of racism, sexism, heterosexism, and class exploitation. (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016, p. 7)

That is, intersectionality is an analytics of power that explores how social categories acquire meaning from power dynamics that are related to structural elements within societies. The work on structural racism (Almeida, 2019), for instance, shows that racism is at the core of contemporary societies and is an integral part of rising social inequalities. Another very good definition of racism links it to State structures: 'Racism is the state-sanctioned and/or extra-legal production and exploitation of group differentiated vulnerabilities to premature (social, civil and/or corporeal) death' (Gilmore, 2007, p. 247). This link between the various forms of death promoted by racism make it an integral part of necropolitics. It is more than the right to kill – as Foucauldian biopolitics already includes that – being the right to promote social death, enslavement and various forms of political violence (Mbembe, 2019). An example would, of course, be the enslaved Africans brought to the Americas during the European Expansion period, but contemporary forms of necropolitics also include several forms of apartheid, the mitigation of social benefits leaving populations subjected to different forms of deprivation and impoverishment, the settler colonization of Palestine and the politics of maiming and generating injured populations (see Puar, 2017), the widespread incarceration of black populations and the criminalization of poverty, among many other examples. These are some of the examples of necropolitics that need to be rethought in the light of intersectional complexity.

These connections contradict the depoliticization of intersectionality used as a methodology. Its usage as a category of analysis requires paying attention to the ways in which these power relations give meaning and materiality to these forms of discrimination and social differentiation. Therefore, when discussing intersectionality, this stance of critical praxis needs to be addressed. Failing to do so provides results oriented by a logic of additive discrimination, or simple interactive discrimination. The logic of intersectionality is analytical and political: it is not a simple methodology of putting data together in order to extract patterns of co-occurrence or simple multiple and connected forms of discrimination. It is an analytics of power relations based on relationality, complexity and context; it is concerned with social justice and reveals the multiple enmeshed components of social inequalities (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016). This form of thinking/action stems from the black feminist and abolitionist organizations that trained activists and intellectuals who understood the

interconnectedness and interdependence of the power structures they were trying to analyse and subvert as black women.

However, for an intersectional framework, this position of black women means paying attention to how gender and race never act alone or in pure forms, they are always signified and materialized by power relations in specific contexts. Therefore a focus on social positions seems to be very useful for understanding how intersectionality works. It is not so much about identity, as about social positions (Hill Collins and Birge, 2016) that are focused on structural intelligibilities within social categories. How people are read and treated according to these categories is always a matter of context. Also, contextual and situational backgrounds offer the possibility of understanding the grounding of such a position. Subject positions inside these categories are vital for understanding the positions occupied inside the discourses that constitute and give materiality to these positions.

Firstly, categories like woman, black or Asian seem to be too broad and single-issue for an intersectional analysis. Intersected categories are more useful for understanding this overlapping and co-constituted effect, such as black women, or indigenous non-binary, among others. We could draw from the work of Chicanas such as Gloria Anzaldúa, with her focus on mestiza consciousness, to also understand the historicity and contextualization of categories that tells difficult stories to single-issue movements. Anzaldúa explored the stories of mestizas such as Malintzin, who was stuck between two countries and two cultures during the Spanish invasion, bringing competing narratives of betrayal to ethno-nationalism and of the emancipation of her need to create her own space and worldview. Therefore social intelligibilities sometimes offer subject positions that, while seeming paradoxical, nonetheless acquire sense in the lived reality of such cultures and landscapes. Anzaldúa (1987, p. 276) calls these in-between spaces:

> Nepantla, which is a Nahuatl word for the space between two bodies of water, the space between two worlds. It is a limited space, a space where you are not this or that but where you are changing.

The experiences of liminality and becoming that Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) discusses reveal another important aspect of intersectionality. This third space, if we use Homi Bhabba's (2004) concept, is a new space of negotiation, fluidity and change when cultures collide and encounter each other. Each person inside this space is a hybrid within these spaces of collision, and therefore is a singularity. These ideas flowing from postcolonial scholarship are very important for understanding the promise of intersectionality, since it is a theory that shares with these ideas a need to understand the in-between spaces and liminality. The reduction of intersectionality to identity

politics hides from view the promises that the concept can offer if seen from a theoretical and political perspective. In my view, intersectionality offers the possibility of thinking with and about the intertwined effects of multiple categories/matrices of privilege and oppression working at the same time. Subject positions are influenced asymmetrically by these effects, depending on the context. But intersectionality also offers the possibility of thinking and producing knowledge about experiences of liminality, such as the figure of the Malintzin, or the figure of the diasporic black woman, or the North African refugees on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, making it a new underwater cemetery at the gates of fortress Europe.

This focus on the lived and singular experience of the effects of several forms of death – social, civil and corporeal – in the context of necropolitics was the target of the analysis undertaken by Saadya Hartman (2008) in her essay, *Venus in Two Acts*. How can one tell the story of two young enslaved black girls killed aboard a slave ship, one of whom is almost totally absent from the archives? Of course, her enslaved name, Venus, suggests sexualization, implying that she was aboard as a sexual treat for sailors and officers at a time when rape and sexual violence, including homicide, was customary in such places. The descriptions of torture, violence and cruelty are very difficult to read, let alone imagine. The archives also contain the white people's views on slavery, and it is therefore impossible to use them to get a glimpse of the experiences of the enslaved amidst such horrors. This is the stuff of horror movies, but it was nonetheless lived by targets of necropolitics. Enslavement belongs to this list of horrors, and to conceive and imagine the lives of these two girls marked for death, and then dead, but not from the position of the white male gaze, from elsewhere, was the task of Saadya Hartman (2008, p. 12, emphasis in original):

> The intent of this practice is not to *give voice* to the slave, but rather to imagine what cannot be verified, a realm of experience which is situated between two zones of death – social and corporeal death – and to reckon with the precarious lives which are visible only in the moment of their disappearance. It is an impossible writing which attempts to say that which resists being said (since dead girls are unable to speak). It is a history of an unrecoverable past; it is a narrative of what might have been or could have been; it is a history written with and against the archive.

This work of trying to uncover an unrecoverable past, of telling about the experience of functioning in the realm of death, aboard a slave ship where cruelty and slaughter are served daily, is the work of critical fabulation, of trying to create a disruptive narrative:

> However, the *history* of black counter-historical projects is one of failure, precisely because these accounts have never been able to install themselves as history, but rather

This haunting, this possibility of offering counter-histories as a project of bringing in the dead, ancestors and zombies who live in the space of necropolitics, is vital if we are to understand what Avery Gordon (2008) presents as the effects of haunting: ghosts that are present by dint of their very absence produce social effects. Such is the case with Venus. Hartman's critical fabulation, although necessarily a failure as Hartman reflects upon it, produced the effect of making Venus present by the very awareness of her absence. This does not, of course, bring the dead back to life, but it does manage in some sense to mark their absence as an effect. The stories of so many people, positioned in this shadowy realm of necropolitics, need to be at least narrated in some sense in order to make visible the mechanisms and processes that marked them for death. In my view, this is a very good example of how intersectional thought can lead us to think between and with these categories of race, gender and enslavement. This can enable us to understand, not only their social positions, but also the need for counter-stories and counter-histories for these subject positions of those marked for death, in the sense of a history that tells more about the oppressed, not only the victorious (Benjamin, 2003).

What is preventing us from seeing the potential of intersectionality is this methodological sense, which seems to have reduced intersectionality and black feminist tradition to issues of indicators and body counts. Intersectionality demands a philosophical and political background because it is a way of telling more complex stories of political economy, commodification, bodies and corpses that can be used for producing and demanding social change. Intersectionality can be a cogent way to make these stories, experiences and counter-histories heard, and thus could be seen as a way of training the imagination for epistemological performance (Spivak, 2012). These multiple stories are complex and cannot be reduced to only one matrix of power operating. They imply that several combinations are at stake here, and that they produce effects that are synergistic, not only multiple. By this, I mean that combined matrices of power will produce effects that are not additive, since intersectionality is not an addition of forces.

Using intersectional framings as a larger epistemological project, I employ the term hyphenation (Oliveira, 2014) – the process of connecting two different words, making them count as one – to debate the ways in which knowledges connect. A good example would be queer(-)feminism, which links both knowledge-practices, working together as strands of both feminism and queer theory. These connections between knowledges involve the transference of ways of thinking, political praxis and methodological

practices, which are transferred from one body of knowledge to others. This connector is a good textual metaphor for the crossings and encounters between knowledges, encounters that cause these knowledges to merge and converge. These are permutations in bodies of knowledge that lead to very relevant and combined advances in our understanding of complex and multi-layered ways of building knowledges that are able to resist. The best example is black feminist thought. As affirmed by Patricia Hill Collins (2008), the intellectual efforts of African American and other women of African descent have been directed towards social change, via producing and reproducing subjugated knowledges (Foucault, 1980). These knowledges are a direct result of a compromise with social justice by a group that has been systematically oppressed at the crossroads of race, gender and class, but also sexual orientation, age and functional diversity, among others (Hill Collins, 2008). The very idea of African American or Afropean women is intersectional.

These forms of subjugated knowledge (Foucault, 1980), to use the Foucauldian concept, have been deauthorized, delegitimized and deemed irrelevant for a long time. However, as shown repeatedly, these are the knowledges that are providing a haven for ideas and policies that can inscribe radical change into everyday politics. Angela Davis, Gina Dent, Erica Miners and Beth Richie (2022) aptly demonstrate within the framework of abolitionist feminism the need to think feminism and abolition together. The abolitionist feminism project that they are collectively producing requires vital changes such as the abolition of prisons and incarceration, restorative justice instead of prison sentences, defunding the police and investing in communities' self-governance. This project has been fuelled by the racist executions of black women and men in the United States, including George Floyd, Mike Brown, Eric Garner, Freddie Gray, Breonna Taylor, Sandra Bland, Rekia Boyd and many others. This is the US context, but the disproportionate rate of incarceration of black people and police violence against them occurs worldwide. Marielle Franco comes to mind, as an example of a black women who was executed as a councilwoman for Rio de Janeiro. No doubt a political assassination of a Brazilian, lesbian, favela dweller, woman, black and working class, Marielle had her political action and her life cut short. Nonetheless, her vision is kept alive, marking an absence that still produces effects, a ghostly matter, a haunting (Gordon, 2007).

This leads us to also question the way in which the depoliticization of intersectionality is being used to contain its effects. I am thinking here about the merely statistical use of intersectionality as an indicator. The EIGE's (2016) definition of an intersectional gender approach is: 'Social research method in which gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality and other social differences are simultaneously analysed'. Note how the lexicon of

intersectionality is reduced socially, politically and analytically. In a nutshell, it is impoverished.

For Gayatri Spivak (2013, p. 118): 'to lexicalize is to separate a linguistic item from its appropriate grammatical system into the conventions of another grammar'.So, to lexicalize intersectionality in the glossary of liberal state Eurofeminism means taking any critical edge that can promote social change or that can resemble any remote feature of the original proposals. We have been witnessing the use of this procedure to tame or restrain the more radical proposals made within intersectional or black feminist thought. This containment strategy to make intersectionality palatable for liberal feminist discourse is, from my perspective, a strategy of depoliticization. State liberal European feminism has framed intersectionality in terms of an idea of merely adding other variables to illustrate complexity. But if we take a look at their ideas on gender equality, there is really no place for intersectional considerations. The EIGE (2016) definition of gender equality states:

> This refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development.

Gender equality is defined without any concerns about the situatedness of inequality. Actors are women and men. Sexual dimorphism is stressed and highlighted and the binaries of gender are expressed as European policy. This definition does not include any concerns about specific subject positions, and it is destined to fail, because it does not acknowledge any effects of overlapping, cross-cutting or interactional effects of the specific ways in which gender is shaped by other categories, such as race, class, sexuality, migratory status or functional diversity, among many others. This leaves the majority of the people it claims to represent outside this vexed way of representing 'women'. Of course, not taking into account the situatedness of any of the intersections (Yuval-Davis, 2015), implies not accounting at all for hyphenation processes and, therefore, voices outside the liberal framework are neither represented nor able to reframe these policies. In the lexicon of positivist-oriented science, the dialectics of liberal-state-oriented feminism at the EU level has found a perfect way to represent the inexorable path towards progress and equality by focusing on statistics and quantitative assessments. They have transformed intersectional positions into indicators.

These assessments focus on groups of women who are already inside the system, and never on the women who show that the system needs to change. For instance, in the statistics on gender equality in universities, women in the cleaning sector are generally ignored. In most EU countries, these women are mostly not white, they are working class and usually less qualified. Their presence could tarnish the statistics that demonstrate European progress in gender equality within universities. In addition, their service is subcontracted, so they become even more invisible due to their contract status. But it is precisely these women for whom intersectionality was created, to politicize their presence in society and to reflect upon the shortcomings of a liberal notion of gender equality, that most of the time, ignoring race and class, treats gender equality as a privilege of the few, not the many.

Moving forward: Dimensioning the social and the political

These notes, using either theoretical and political forms of thinking about gender and feminism, or examples of the contingency of social situations, converge on the need to fight for better material conditions of existence within the frame of a wider struggle against neoliberal rationalities in economic policy, with an understanding of situated intersections that not only extend beyond economics but come to signify these economic policies. This implies that only considering material conditions may not be enough without taking further measures to think about the contingency of social situations. Two examples are offered below: the first is domains of situated intersectionality as proposed by Nira Yuval-Davis (2015), and the second is recent work on the expansion of care provision as radical politics, by Lynne Segal (2023) and the Care Collective (2020).

Yuval-Davis (2015) describes four domains that it can be helpful to consider when tackling a situated intersectional form of thinking about this contingency. One is the state domain and its borders. The ways in which states operate – locally, nationally, regionally and supra-nationality – is a crucial part of thinking about these entanglements. The level of legitimacy of governance, the ways in which social and political actors are figured in state action and the wide range of effects this has on people living in a territory, are some of the concerns of this domain. The second domain relates to zoning:

> the boundaries of the multi-scalar zones in which differential levels of different kinds of economic, social, cultural and political resources are produced, reproduced and are distributed (or not) to the people living within these boundaries. (Yuval-Davis, 2015, p. 98)

Another domain to consider has to do with different forms of belonging to political or social projects (citizenship, religions, nationalism and others). The last domain pertains to structures of reproduction – social, biological and symbolic – such as gender, generation and local communities, among others. All these levels are permeated by social inequalities, different forms of social capital and different ways of enhancing or diminishing social inequalities. It is interesting to take these levels into consideration because they presuppose different scales, temporalities and locations, either social, geographical or even geopolitical.

Yuval-Davis (2015) proposes a situated intersectionality, largely focused on social inequalities and their distribution. This effort to move beyond identity and contemplating social structures seems very promising in order to reveal how combinations of situated knowledges are useful for understanding the interplay between structural forms of power relations and the more diffused power that extends everywhere in societies. Thinking about power implies considering the various ways in which it works and controls, constituting either a more dynamic or a more structural way, or even both at the same time. This leads to important dialogues between these approaches, namely a more discursive one with a more structural approach. Focusing on the possibilities offered by such dialogues, intersectionality viewed from this situated perspective may be useful in offering a description that is more nuanced, does not focus entirely on class like classic Marxist approaches, but can offer analytics that bring these different facets together to incorporate the complex interplay between various axes of power relations.

Therefore, this idea of intersectionality as a fundamental analytical tool to understand complex, multilayered axes of oppression and privilege, which are nonetheless located in specific geospatial temporalities, implies going much further than a vision based strictly on identity politics. Understanding the politics of location is fundamental here.

The work on care is of central importance in this vision. Care provision is not only limited to the sphere of reproduction, but can be viewed in a more universal way. The work produced by The Care Collective (2020), consisting of Andreas Chatzidakis, Jamie Hakim, Jo Littler, Catherine Rottenberg and Lynne Segal, is based on a critique of the carelessness regimes that have been implemented via neoliberal austerity regimes and within a context of hard-right dystopian vision. As shown by Segal (2023), this tragedy that has been inflicted on the working class and the more underprivileged sectors of society is based on an erosion of care provision, which is attacked by the media using misogynistic metaphors such as the nanny state. This has successfully created a politics of carelessness, entire regimes of it. The privatization of care provision under a minimal State neoliberal rationality (Brown, 2015), the constant threat to the budgets for healthcare, welfare, culture and education, along with the austerity logics

applied to these sectors, have increasingly jeopardized the public care provision once available to everyone. Therefore, an important struggle for the universality of care provision needs to be incorporated into social movements and into radical democratic politics. An acknowledgement of the interdependence between humans, between humans and other, non-human actors, and with the environment is a basic condition for understanding the importance of care at this stage.

Butler (2015) claimed that shared vulnerability is a possible sign of coalition, a shared interdependence of our frailty as bodies. This performativity of the body as political, as the site for shared weaknesses, but also an opportunity for shared political alliances, is inspired by the claims of disability studies, which have been vocal in claiming interdependence as a universal for humans. Indeed, human life without care would be utterly impossible, and the lack of attention given to care can only be justified by a gendered division of labour that treats care as an intrinsic quality of women, who are destined to provide it.

Lynne Segal (2023), addressing the issue of this interdependence, argues that it is crucial to consider how certain figures, such as mothers, people with disabilities, social movements for radical democracy, the elderly, politics and involvement in local communities are important to teach people how to 'lean on me', rather than to 'lean in', the title of a book by a social media executive, to which Segal alludes in her title. Instead of adapting and moving forward in a world where this careless regime threatens even the planet we share, this mandate for universal care as a right and a condition to move, emphasizes the relevance of care and being cared for at all levels. It brings the body back to the centre of political action, a body that is viable only through certain conditions of existence and relationality (Butler, 2015).

I read these works, along with the work of Wendy Brown (2015), as an important attempt to break with the mandate of neoliberalism so well expressed in the obscene observation of Margaret Thatcher: 'There is no such thing as society. Only individuals and their families.' It is obscene because it does not recognize the network of hands that made such individuals and such families viable, that cared for them and were cared for by them. It is obscene because it condemns citizens to a carelessness regime, where everything is turned into a resource. This model of thinking is shared by many, under corporate greed and State connivence in the destruction of the commons, privatized under the name of profit of shareholders (Segal, 2023).

This bleak situation can, however, provide the foundations for life-affirming struggles. The struggle for climate justice and against the social mandate of the capitalocene (Moore, 2015) – cheap nature and a right to exploit it – is another good example of bodies organizing by using our interdependence and need to care and to be cared for

the very planet that we live on (Haraway, 2016). Thinking with these movements is vital, as is thinking with Black Lives Matter, feminist and queer collectives, the people with disability movement, trans and sex workers' movements and radical democracy groups. Theory can help us to understand the mapping and the cartographies of action, but the strategies and tactics used by these movements are the dynamics of the different ways in which these questions can be reframed and transformed into practice.

A feminist movement and theory that is centred only on essentialist views of gender fails to understand gender itself. As I hope to have shown in this text, a narrowly focused view of gender does not include other matrices of power, where gender is used to constitute specific subject positions. This porosity of gender to other categories is very well expressed in the concept of intersectionality, and specifically the idea of situated intersectionality presented by Nira Yuval-Davis (2015). Gender is then a gender that is never gender alone, a gender that is enacted by other axes of power. This conception of discrimination also implies that public policies should not focus only on single issues, but also on multiple intersections, as we have shown (Malfrán and de Oliveira, 2020), by applying intersectional lenses to understand the effects of Cuban social policies on medically assisted reproduction and trans citizenship. So intersectionality can make a relevant contribution to understanding gender not only in scholarly production but also in the definition, formulation and analysis of concrete public policies.

To conclude, I would like to revisit critical race studies, whose inquiry makes us think of racism as:

> a relentless daily fact of life in American society, and the ideology of racism and white supremacy are ingrained in the political and legal structures so as to be nearly unrecognizable. Racism is a constant, not aberrant, occurrence in American society. (Cummings, 2013, p. 108)

I do not think this is only a case of American exceptionalism, but a more general problem observed in Western societies. This is a logic followed by liberal democracies founded on colonization, empire and white supremacy when confronted with their own racism or other inequalities, and treat those problems as aberrations, bias or a distorted way of understanding reality. This logic of a few bad apples in the basket fails to recognize the racist foundations of the state, the inherent logic of the mass incarceration of black people as a continuation of servitude and slavery, and the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities to racialized people. Liberal democracies understand racism as an individual problem, something resembling a lack of consciousness or biased and prejudiced individual expressions. As Sílvio Almeida (2019) explains, under this conception of individualistic racism, the problem lies in individuals who are racists, and such racism could be eradicated by sanctions in civil codes. However, this lack of

recognition of its social aspects leads to a belief that racism can be fought simply by educating people and punishing racist actions. This vision of remedial, short-term responses does not acknowledge that racism is widespread, present in both explicit and implicit ways, interlinked with other inequalities and common in Western societies. Racism, as Foucault puts it in a brief lesson on the topic at the College de France, is not an issue of discrimination, of ideology, or of prejudice, it is a necessary condition and justification for the State to inflict violence on the population. Foucault describes in the transition from the 18th to the 19th centuries, a change from the anatomo-politics of the human body – from which the division into a dual model of sexes ensues (see Laqueur, 1990) – to what he calls the biopolitics of the human race. That is:

> Sovereignty took life and let live. And now we have the emergence of a power that I would call the power of regularization, and it, in contrast, consists in making live and letting die. (Foucault, 2008, p. 247)

Racism enters the stage as a state mechanism of power by setting conditions and justifications for letting people die. It makes a separation between populations worth preserving and others that should be eradicated, based on discourses of the appropriation of evolutionism and racial theories. In fact, racialization, the political grammar of colonization, was at work here. Foucault uses the example of Nazism to understand the logics of racism as a State mechanism. But, in the case of Europe, many other countries also had this racism of state as a mandate and operated through this to exterminate the colonized, or any groups for that matter, who refused European domination. Whether in Africa, the Americas, Oceania or Asia, the repertoire of European colonial racism saw States participating in the extermination of indigenous populations, who were wiped out, brutalized, expropriated and enslaved (Lindqvist, 1996).

This racial capitalism (Sweeney, 2021) introduced by European countries includes racialization, but also gendering, as vital mechanisms. Gender needs to be considered as part of these systems of domination. Rather than looking at gender as a naturalized form of difference and segmentation of a population, thinking about the political economy of gender requires a similar shift to the one that Critical Race Studies performed on race. Taking gender from a field of individual identities, group membership or even social construction, thinking on gender becomes another way to reiterate power over bodies, people and populations. This view of gender as simultaneously material and an operation of power, at both micro and macro levels, implies a critique of the visions that occlude these workings of power, such as the liberal state feminism of the European Union, so eloquently expressed in the definitions, policies and framing of Euro gender equality. Additionally, treating gender as a single

issue fails to think about or address the intricate ways in which gender connects, refigures and is refigured by other mechanisms of power and becomes inscribed in the state and in social life. In my view, gender is a situated materialization of power, enmeshed with and propelled/inhibited by other matrices of power.

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Husvägg med grönska (by Håkan Röjder)

Hypo(cris)y of neoliberal times and understanding quiet quitting: exploring gender inequality in academia

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Abstract

This article examines the phenomenon of quiet quitting in academia within the context of gender studies and neoliberal politics, exploring its manifestations, implications, and underlying power dynamics. Drawing upon Karen Barad's framework of "intra-action" and the concept of "diffraction" (Barad, 2014), In this paper, the discussion revolves around how gender inequality is produced and reproduced in academic settings.

The theory of diffraction, derived from physics, explores wave behavior and interactions. It has broader applications as a metaphorical framework in social sciences, illuminating complex relationships and the effects of differences in various contexts(Haraway, 1997). This paper employs the diffraction lens to comprehend the complexities of gender identities and experiences within academia, exploring the interplay of social, cultural, and material forces. By critically analyzing existing discussions and exposing the contradictions within academia, it challenges the proclaimed values of equality and diversity.

The exploration of quiet quitting in the context of gender equality and neoliberal politics brings attention to the existing contradictions and hypocrisies within academia. Quiet quitting refers to the phenomenon where individuals disengage from the academic system in response to challenges such as discrimination, lack of support, or unfavorable working conditions (Rieck, 2022). By focusing on this issue, the article highlights the need for systemic changes to address the oppressive structures that contribute to quiet quitting. And the research deepens our understanding of the

implications of quiet quitting and encourages critical reflection on the values and practices of academia.

Ultimately, it is argued that "quiet quitting" is not a viable solution in academia. Instead, this paper calls for collective efforts to challenge the status quo, demand structural transformations, and actively shape a more equitable and inclusive academic landscape. The theory of diffraction and intra-action not only aids in understanding existing gender inequalities within the system but also provides a framework for reconstructing and promoting gender equality. The objective is to create a future where "quiet quitting" becomes obsolete, and genuine equality becomes the norm in academia.

Introduction

The motivation behind writing this article stems from personal experiences that prompted an examination of the prevalent phenomenon known as quiet quitting within academia. Three years ago, a sudden palpitation in the middle of the night led to an appointment with the psychiatric ward the following day. During the interview, overwhelmed with emotions, I tearfully expressed feelings of worthlessness. Similarly, two years later, a visit to the emergency room due to high blood pressure resulted in being told that my heart was perfectly healthy, but stress was likely the culprit. These experiences compelled me to reflect on the impact of academic life, particularly as a gender studies researcher in Turkey.

Figure 1. The majority of the world's employees are "quiet quitting." (State of the Global Workplace Report, 2023)

"Quiet quitting" is a response to workplace burnout, involving scaling back on exceeding job responsibilities (Rieck, 2022) and refers to the silent disengagement from academic or professional endeavors without a formal announcement (Serenko, 2023). As per the State of the Global Workplace: 2023 Report, a significant proportion of the global workforce is actively involved in quiet quitting(*State Of The Global Workplace 2023 Report, The Voice Of The World's Employees*, 2023).

However, this solution may not be equally applicable to all employees, especially women and people of color, who tend to experience higher levels of burnout. Women in various workplaces report experiencing higher rates of on-the-job burnout compared to their male counterparts (*State Of The Global Workplace 2023 Report, The Voice Of The World's Employees*, 2023). Additionally, women of color are even more prone to feeling burnt out and are less likely to disclose their mental health concerns at work (*Women @ Work 2023: A Global Outlook*, 2023). While quiet quitting may seem like a logical response to alleviate burnout, it can have unequal consequences for different groups within the workforce.

Table 1. Summary table of the number of teaching staff (Summary Report on Number of Faculty Members, 2023)

University Type	Professor			Associate professor			Doctor Lecturer			Instructor			Research Assistant			Grand total		
	M	W	T	M	W	T	M	W	T	M	W	T	M	W	T	M	W	T
PUBLIC	19297	9917	29214	12319	8186	20505	19155	15591	34746	15621	14361	29982	19392	21054	40446	85784	69109	154893
PRIVATE	3525	1899	5424	1311	1256	2567	4472	5114	9586	2291	4473	6764	1985	3221	5206	13584	15963	29547
PRIVATE VOCATIONAL SCHOOL	3	0	3	1	1	2	9	28	37	64	144	208	0	0	0	77	173	250
TOTAL	22825	11816	34641	13631	9443	23074	23636	20733	44369	17976	18978	36954	21377	24275	45652	99445	85245	184690

According to a survey conducted by Nature (Forrester, 2023), 75% of the 1,748 self-selected respondents reported a reduction in their work efforts since March 2020. The study primarily focused on individuals in academia, constituting 73% of the participants, while the remaining 27% were distributed among various sectors, including industry, government, clinical roles, non-profit organizations, and other workplaces. The participants represented diverse career stages, with 19% being master's or PhD students, 17% postdoctoral fellows or research associates, 17% research or staff scientists, 10% assistant professors, 22% senior professors or lecturers, 7% middle or senior management, and 8% in other positions. These findings shed light on the challenges and changes experienced by professionals across different fields and career stages.

However, in the context of academic institutions, such as universities and research centers, the influence of patriarchal regimes is evident, leading to a system that upholds

gender inequality. Academic institutions, like society, tend to concentrate power among certain groups while marginalizing others. This perpetuates the existing power imbalances and makes it difficult for women and marginalized individuals to advance. According to the 2023 reports from the Higher Education Council of Turkey, the data reveals a gender disparity among teaching staff in academia. Out of the total teaching staff, 99,445 are men and 85,245 are women as you can see on the table below. This includes vocational training school programs, undergraduate programs, graduate schools and institutes, and centers for application and research in both state and private universities. A closer examination of the data reveals gender inequality at various academic levels, with a visible disparity observed in all levels except for research assistants.

In this article, gender plays a critical role in understanding the effects of quiet quitting within academia. Women academics often encounter gender bias in various aspects, such as hiring processes, promotions, and salary allocation. Moreover, the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, and the persistent burden of balancing professional responsibilities with caregiving duties, contribute to the unequal experiences and opportunities they face. For example, according to the report (Mary Lou O'Neil *et al.*, 2019) by Kadir Has University Gender and Women's Studies Research Center *(Gender Center)*, Turkey's higher education sector has experienced significant growth and change since the implementation of the current higher education law in 1981 ('Yükseköğretim Kanunu, Higher Education Law, No. 254', 1981). The establishment of private universities has expanded the educational landscape, although the majority of students are still enrolled at public universities. The number of academic staff has also increased, including a rise in the participation of women in academia since the 1980s. However, despite this growth, gender inequality in academia remains deeply rooted, as evidenced by the underrepresentation of women in top management positions and across various academic fields. This gender disparity has persisted over the past three decades, indicating a need for continued efforts to address and rectify the imbalance.

While the numbers provide a glimpse of the magnitude of inequality in academia, it is important to recognize that they only scratch the surface of a much deeper issue. The neoliberal emphasis on competition, individual success, and market-driven metrics can create a hyper-competitive and hostile academic environment. This environment often rewards and perpetuates traditional patriarchal norms, further marginalizing women and hindering their advancement. As a result, the culture of academia is constructed by gendered power dynamics, then becomes entrenched in gendered hierarchies and power dynamics that reproduce inequalities.

To fully grasp the dynamics at play, it is essential to talk about an examination of the broader system of neoliberalism that has deeply influenced academia nowadays. Neoliberalism, characterized by market-driven policies ('Neoliberalism', no date) and an emphasis on individualism, has significantly transformed the landscape of higher education (Desierto and De Maio, 2020). Universities have increasingly embraced corporate models, prioritizing productivity, measurable outcomes, and financial gains. As a specific example of the impact of neoliberalism in academia is the rise of performance-based evaluation systems that prioritize metrics like publication output and grant funding, leading to increased pressure on academics to produce measurable outputs whilst potentially neglecting other valuable aspects of scholarly work. Furthermore, neoliberalism's emphasis on individual competition and market-driven values in academia has led to academics, constantly feeling the pressure to meet productivity targets, secure funding, and navigate precarious employment conditions to maintain a competitive edge in the neoliberal academic landscape (Berg, Huijbens and Larsen, 2016).
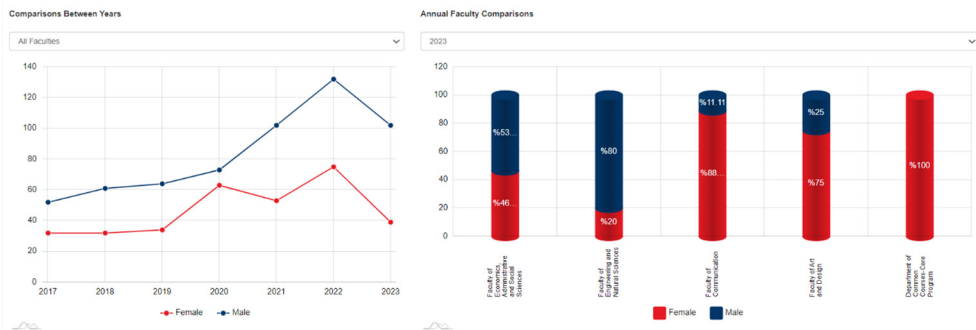
Figure 2. Ratio of articles with female/male authors to the total number of articles, 2023 (Gender Data, 2023)

In academia in Turkey, quiet quitting often occurs as a response to various challenges such as discrimination, lack of support, and unfavorable working conditions. This observation is based on experiences and interactions within the academic community. Furthermore, to provide a broader context and evidence, data from Kadir Has University can be referred to, highlighting gender disparities in funding, support, and publication rates. This data corroborates the existence of systemic issues that contribute to quiet quitting among women in academia.

Before initiating this research, conversations were held with colleagues in academia who had faced similar challenges. While they expressed their complaints about these issues in informal discussions, none of them agreed to participate in research interviews, even

under anonymous conditions. This underscores the sensitivity of the topic and individuals' reluctance to openly share their experiences, reinforcing the necessity for a comprehensive examination of the barriers and complexities surrounding gender inequality in academia. Within the neoliberal context, the phenomenon of quiet quitting emerges as a complex and multifaceted issue with implications for gender dynamics within academia. While the term quiet quitting is relatively new and there may not be specific data on this issue, it is evident that many academics, particularly women, have chosen to resign due to the challenges mentioned. Although quantitative data may be limited, qualitative accounts and personal narratives shed light on the prevalence of quiet quitting as a response to the obstacles faced by individuals in academia, exacerbated by the pressures and inequalities perpetuated by neoliberal policies.

Furthermore, the neoliberal logic of market-driven metrics and performance evaluation also tends to prioritize certain fields and disciplines over others, often favoring those that align with market demands and commercial interests. This can disproportionately affect areas of study that are traditionally associated with women, such as social sciences and humanities, leading to their devaluation and underfunding. According to the report by Gender Center, faculties demonstrate that many academic fields are deeply gendered in Turkey. While some faculties follow the overall national trends and are nearing parity, faculties of "Architecture and Engineering", "Forestry", "Theology", and "Veterinary" Science are decidedly male dominated (Mary Lou O'Neil *et al.*, 2019). The report highlights that the most unequal faculty is Theology, where only 10% of academics are women. Conversely, faculties of "Architecture", "Communication", and "Health" Sciences show a majority of women. Notably, the most female-dominated faculty is Health Sciences, with 72.7% of all positions held by women. The faculty closest to achieving gender equality is Business Administration. These findings reveal the complex dynamics of gender inequality within academia. In this context, neoliberal politics have reshaped academia, placing greater emphasis on competition, market forces, and individual success. These dynamics have a distinct gendered impact, exacerbating existing inequalities and barriers for women in academia.

Within the academic landscape, a clear pattern emerges as male dominance permeates every level of the hierarchy, perpetuating systemic gender inequalities. Women continuously face discrimination, marginalization, and formidable obstacles in their pursuit of career advancement, effectively impeding their progress within academia. The underrepresentation of women in senior positions and decision-making roles underscores the deeply entrenched patriarchal structure that maintains and reinforces gender disparities. For example, according to the report of Gender Center, in terms of

upper management in academia in Turkey, there exists significant inequity. The report reveals that only 9.1% of rectors and 10.3% of vice rectors are women. Additionally, at the level of faculty deans, women hold only 21.3% of the positions. These statistics highlight the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles within the academic hierarchy, indicating persistent gender disparities in higher education management.

This study employs the concept of diffraction and intra-action, as conceptualized by Karen Barad (Barad, 2014), to explore gender inequality within academia in the context of neoliberalism. Utilizing the diffraction framework, the paper aims to delve into the intricate interplay and interference of diverse social, cultural, and material forces that shape gender identities and experiences within the academic sphere. It is important to acknowledge that this paper presents only a glimpse of the broader discussion surrounding the topic of gender inequality in academia. The methodology section will further explore the research approach and analytical framework used to understand the complexities and entanglements that contribute to the phenomenon of quiet quitting. By delving into the methodology, a comprehensive understanding of the research process will be provided, shedding light on the intricacies involved in studying this critical issue. In this paper, understanding the intricate relationship between neoliberalism, quiet quitting, and gender is crucial for addressing the systemic challenges faced by women in academia. It requires a critical examination of the values and priorities promoted within the neoliberal framework and the ways in which they intersect with gender inequalities.

The aim of this article is to explore the phenomenon of quiet quitting in academia within the context of gender studies in neoliberal times. By examining the hypocrisies and contradictions present in academic institutions through the diffraction lens, the study sheds light on the urgent need for transformative change and a genuine commitment to inclusivity and social justice. To further explore the topics discussed in this article, the following research questions will guide the examination:

- What are the underlying factors and power dynamics that contribute to the perpetuation of quiet quitting in academia, particularly among individuals who face marginalization and discrimination within the scope of gender?

- How does the theory of diffraction as conceptualized by Karen Barad, provide insights into the complexities of power, identity, and institutional structures within academia, and how can it inform our understanding of the phenomenon of quiet quitting?

- How can the concept of quiet quitting be critically examined and understood within the broader discourse of gender equality, and neoliberal politics, and how does it challenge the proclaimed values of academia?

Method

This study employs a theoretical analysis approach, supplemented by the diffraction framework, to explore the phenomenon of quiet quitting in academia within the context of gender studies. The primary methodological emphasis is on engaging with existing theories and conceptual frameworks. The theoretical analysis involves a thorough review and synthesis of key concepts, debates, and perspectives related to gender studies. By examining the existing body of literature through the diffraction lens, the study seeks to develop a comprehensive understanding of the underlying factors that contribute to the prevalence of quiet quitting among individuals, particularly those facing marginalization and discrimination.

Karen Barad's theory of intra-action, in conjunction with the diffraction framework, serves as a guiding framework for this analysis. It offers valuable insights into the entanglement of various factors and the co-constitution of phenomena within specific contexts. Barad's notion of diffraction as a methodological tool helps to uncover the complex interactions and interdependencies between gender inequality, neoliberal politics, and the phenomenon of quiet quitting in academia.

While these concepts offer valuable insights into the complexities of power structures and interactions, it is essential to acknowledge their limitations. One potential weakness of the diffraction framework is that it may not fully capture the intricacies of power dynamics and may not offer a comprehensive understanding of how various social identities intersect to shape individuals' experiences within academia. To address this limitation, the exploration of other concepts, such as intersectionality, could enrich our understanding of the multi-dimensional nature of power and privilege in academic settings. Intersectionality emphasizes how different aspects of identity, such as race, gender, class, and more, interact and intersect to create unique experiences of oppression and privilege (Crenshaw, 1991). By incorporating intersectionality into the analysis, we can gain a more nuanced understanding of the intersecting power structures that contribute to quiet quitting in academia.

Additionally, this research acknowledges that the data presented is limited by the lack of specific statistics on quiet quitting and relies on anecdotal evidence and personal experiences. As such, future research could complement this theoretical analysis with

empirical data, such as interviews or surveys, to gain more comprehensive insights into the experiences and perspectives of individuals affected by quiet quitting. This study also recognizes the context-specific nature of academia, and findings may not fully represent all academic institutions or regions, and thus, generalizations should be made with caution.

Despite these limitations, the exploration of diffraction and intra-action provides a valuable theoretical framework to uncover and understand the intricate power dynamics and gender inequalities within academia. By acknowledging these weaknesses and limitations, we can foster a more robust and inclusive discourse surrounding the phenomenon of quiet quitting and gender inequality in academia.

Methodology

The methodology employed in this study adopts a theoretical analysis approach, centering on the exploration of quiet quitting in academia from a perspective, focusing on the underlying gender issues that contribute to this phenomenon. The study critically engages with existing theoretical frameworks, including the diffraction framework, to enhance understandings of the phenomenon. Drawing on Karen Barad's theory of intra-action, the study employs the diffraction framework to analyze and comprehend the intricate dynamics of gender inequality within academia. The diffraction framework also allows for a nuanced examination of how gendered power relations intersect with other dimensions of identity, such as race, class, and sexuality, within complex systems.

In general terms, diffraction can be explained as a phenomenon where waves, such as light or sound waves *(as you can see on the left)*, encounter an obstacle, or pass through a narrow opening, causing them to spread out and interfere with each other. This interference creates patterns of light and dark regions, known as diffraction patterns. These patterns provide insights into the characteristics of the waves and the nature of their interaction with the surrounding environment.
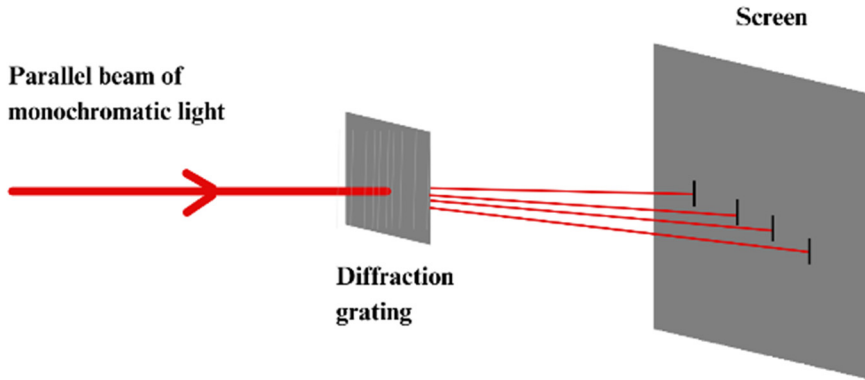
Figure 3. This graph was created by myself.

Scholars like Karen Barad and Donna Haraway have made significant contributions to the understanding and application of the concept of diffraction and intra-action. Diffraction, a fundamental physical phenomenon explored in physics and the philosophy of physics, unveils patterns of difference and their transformative effects on the world (Barad, 2014). Instead of simply mapping where differences appear, diffraction maps where the effects of differences emerge. It reveals the intricate interconnections and entanglements among elements, representing a phenomenon that is itself entangled. The specificity of these entanglements holds great significance. Diffraction patterns, resulting from overlapping waves with varying phases and amplitudes, provide evidence of superpositions and illuminate the complexity of the material world. In the realm of methodology and epistemology, diffraction offers a valuable model for non-representationalist approaches, shedding light on crucial philosophical questions related to objectivity, measurement, nature, meaning-making, intelligibility, causality, and the relationship between discourse and the material world (Barad, 2014). Complementing diffraction, intra-action emphasizes the organic and ontological interconnectedness and co-constitution of entities. Together, diffraction and intra-action provide a conceptual framework for understanding the intricate material-discursive practices and critical perspectives involved in knowledge production and comprehending the world (Barad, 2014).

According to Karen Barad (Barad, 2014), diffraction is deeply influenced by the rich tradition of feminist theorizing on difference, showcasing its significance in understanding the complexities of the world. By integrating physics theory into this methodology, we can shed light on the intricate interplay of power, identity, and institutional structures within the topic under investigation. This approach allows us

to unravel the entangled nature of material-discursive practices and critically analyze the mechanisms shaping knowledge production and our understanding of the world.

Also, Donna Haraway views diffraction as a metaphorical and theoretical framework that explores the interconnections and interferences between various elements, allowing for a nuanced understanding of complex phenomena (Donna J. Haraway, 1997). She sees intra-action as the mutual constitution and co-emergence of entities through their interactions, challenging the notion of separate entities. Haraway's engagement with diffraction and intra-action offers alternative ways of understanding power, identity, and knowledge production, promoting relational and situated approaches to knowledge.

By applying the diffraction framework, the study seeks to uncover the ways in which gender identities are not fixed or isolated entities but emerge and are shaped through ongoing intra-actions. It enables a deeper understanding of how neoliberal ideologies impact the construction of gendered subjectivities and the distribution of resources and opportunities within academia. As an easy example for the diffraction framework; you can imagine that you are standing near a wall, and you hear someone playing music in the next room. Then you notice that the sound of the music is audible even though the door is closed. How is that possible? The answer is the phenomenon at play here is diffraction of sound waves. When the sound waves produced by the music encounter the closed door, they don't simply bounce back or pass through the door like a solid object. Instead, they diffract or bend around the edges of the door. This bending of sound waves allows them to reach your ears, even though you are not in the same room as the music source. The diffraction of sound enables it to spread out and wrap around obstacles, like the door, reaching areas that would otherwise be shielded from direct sound transmission. So, in this example, the diffraction of sound waves explains why you can hear the music from the next room, even though there's a closed door in between. It demonstrates how waves, in this case sound waves, can interact with obstacles and bend around them, allowing the propagation of sound to unexpected places. This concept of diffraction applies not only to sound waves but also to other types of waves, such as light, water waves, or even electromagnetic waves. It helps us understand how waves behave and how they can interact with and be influenced by their surroundings, leading to fascinating phenomena that we observe in our daily lives.

Furthermore, the study utilizes the diffraction framework to critically examine the power dynamics and discursive practices operating within academia. It highlights the need to challenge neoliberal logic and its reinforcement of gender inequalities, such as performance-based evaluations, limited funding, and undervaluation of care work. I can illustrate this concept further by drawing upon the previous example I discussed; you can imagine a university department that historically has been dominated by male

professors and scholars. The department follows a traditional curriculum that primarily focuses on male perspectives and contributions, while marginalizing or ignoring the contributions of women and non-binary individuals. Now, let's say a new female faculty member joins the department and starts teaching courses that incorporate feminist perspectives and highlight the work of women scholars. This introduction of a different perspective creates a diffraction effect within the department. Instead of simply accepting the existing norms and perpetuating the male-dominated discourse, the presence of this faculty member and her teaching practices diffracts the established knowledge and power structures. Her inclusion of feminist theories and women's voices challenges the dominant narrative, opens new discussions, and provides alternative ways of thinking about the subject matter. This diffraction effect causes a ripple within the department, as it prompts other faculty members and students to engage with these new perspectives, question the status quo, and reevaluate their own biases and assumptions. It may lead to the creation of new research projects, collaborations, and teaching approaches that are more inclusive and diverse.

Furthermore, the male-dominated nature of academia poses a significant obstacle to achieving progress and equality. The diffraction theory illuminates how the introduction of diverse perspectives, such as feminist theories and women's voices, can disrupt and diffract the prevailing knowledge and power structures. This inclusion of marginalized perspectives initiates a transformative process that challenges existing norms and fosters a more inclusive and equitable academia.

The examples highlight the importance of diffraction in academia, as it encourages us to embrace diverse perspectives, challenge existing biases, and create spaces where different voices can be heard and valued. By diffracting the established knowledge, academia can move towards a more comprehensive understanding of complex issues, promoting equality and fostering a richer intellectual environment. Through the application of the diffraction framework, this study contributes to the broader understanding of gender dynamics and power structures in academic environments. It offers insights into the complex interplay between gender, power, and neoliberal ideologies, and provides a foundation for critically analyzing and challenging the mechanisms that perpetuate gender inequality.

Analyses

Drawing on Karen Barad's theory of intra-action and the diffraction framework, a deeper understanding of the hierarchical and male-dominant neoliberal politics in academia and their profound impact on women academics is gained. The diffraction

framework allows for analysis of how entities and phenomena emerge through entangled relationships and interactions, surpassing a simplistic cause-and-effect understanding. By applying the diffraction framework, the interactions of institutional structures, social expectations, cultural norms, and individual agency in shaping these barriers can be analyzed, enabling researchers and institutions to address gender inequality and foster a more inclusive academic environment.

Moreover, within this framework, the recognition is made that hierarchical power dynamics and norms in academia are not solely imposed by external forces but are also internalized and enacted by individuals through intra-action. Another example can be seen as an illustration of diffraction in the context of academia and gender; women academics who have succeeded within this system may also adopt and reproduce the discriminatory practices and norms they have experienced, perpetuating, and reinforcing existing power structures. This intra-action sustains a cycle of inequality and discrimination, hindering gender equality efforts and marginalizing women from positions of power and influence. However, instead of challenging the hierarchical power dynamics and promoting equality, the same oppressive behaviors are adopted and further enforced on employees, including other women. This example demonstrates the complexities and entanglements within power relations and how individuals are shaped by existing power structures even when they themselves face discrimination. It showcases intra-action at play, where the woman's principal actions are entangled with the oppressive system in which she operates.

In this context, neoliberalism tends to reinforce existing power imbalances, and gender inequality is a significant manifestation of this power asymmetry. Exploring the intersection of gender and neoliberalism in academia allows us to uncover and expose the power dynamics at play within the system. This analysis reveals how power operates within academic institutions, perpetuating unequal outcomes for women. By bringing attention to these power dynamics, we can challenge and critique the existing structures that hinder women's progress and contribute to their experiences of quiet quitting.

The diffraction lens helps us analyze this situation by highlighting the need to critically examine power dynamics and challenge the reproduction of oppressive norms. Also, the diffraction lens enables us to analyze this situation by emphasizing the importance of critically examining power dynamics and challenging the perpetuation of oppressive norms. It draws attention to the fact that the behavior of a woman can be a product of the power structures within academia that she has internalized and is now reproducing through her actions. In other words, her behavior is influenced and shaped by the existing hierarchical and gendered norms that exist within the academic system. By recognizing and understanding this diffraction effect, it will become important to address the systemic issues and power structures that perpetuate inequality and

discrimination. This example underscores the significance of diffraction theory in shedding light on the complexities of power, identity, and institutional structures within academia, particularly in relation to gender dynamics.

By the diffraction framework, the study acknowledges the intricate interconnections between gender, power, and institutional structures within academia. It highlights the need for transformative interventions that address systemic issues and go beyond individual-level changes. This analysis calls for recognizing and challenging the intra-action that perpetuates oppressive norms, fostering a more inclusive and equitable academic environment.

In the context of diffraction and intra-action, the phenomenon of quiet quitting in academia manifests in various ways, analyzed through the lens of gender studies and illuminated by the influence of neoliberal politics. Marginalized individuals disengage from the academic system as a coping mechanism to protect their well-being. The pressure to conform to dominant norms and the lack of support contribute to disengagement, leading to withdrawal from academic participation, avoidance of leadership roles, or even leaving academia entirely.

The diffraction framework helps us understand the underlying factors and power dynamics that contribute to the perpetuation of quiet quitting. Neoliberal policies prioritize individual competition and market-driven values, resulting in the unequal distribution of resources, opportunities, and recognition within academia. Intersections of gender, race, class, and other identities shape individuals' experiences and access to resources. Power dynamics within academic institutions, including hierarchical structures and gatekeeping practices, reinforce and perpetuate these inequalities.

Understanding the relationship between neoliberalism and quiet quitting provides valuable insights into potential solutions and interventions. It enables us to identify specific areas where policy changes, institutional reforms, and cultural shifts can be implemented to address gender inequality and create a more inclusive academic environment. By pinpointing the challenges posed by neoliberalism, we can develop targeted strategies to mitigate its negative effects on women in academia. This knowledge empowers us to advocate for and implement changes that foster greater gender equity and inclusivity within academic institutions.

And applying the diffraction framework to the analysis of quiet quitting illuminates how power relations, discourses, and institutional structures intra-act to shape the experiences and decisions of marginalized individuals. It emphasizes the interplay between personal agency and structural constraints imposed by the academic system.

Within the broader discourse of gender equality, and neoliberal politics, the concept of quiet quitting calls for critical examination. It exposes the hypocrisy within academia, where there may be a disconnect between rhetoric and reality. The diffraction framework prompts us to critically examine the systemic barriers and biases that perpetuate marginalization, demanding structural changes to dismantle oppressive power structures and create inclusive environments that value and support individuals from diverse backgrounds.

By analyzing the article through the lens of the diffraction framework, a deeper understanding is gained of the manifestation and implications of quiet quitting in academia, the underlying power dynamics, the insights offered by the theory of intra-action, and the critical examination of this concept within the broader social and political context. This analysis highlights the need for transformative interventions that challenge the reproduction of oppressive norms and foster inclusive academic spaces.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the application of the diffraction framework in analyzing gender inequality in academia sheds light on the multifaceted dynamics that contribute to the perpetuation of disparities, particularly for women. By examining the interplay of social, cultural, and institutional forces, we gain a deeper understanding of the complex web of factors that shape the experiences and opportunities of individuals within academia.

The example of gender inequality in the fields serves as a stark reminder of the challenges that women continue to face in pursuing academic careers. Despite advancements in awareness and initiatives to promote gender equality, the underrepresentation of women in these fields persists. The diffraction framework allows us to uncover the underlying power dynamics, cultural biases, and systemic barriers that contribute to this inequality.

Moreover, the diffraction framework highlights the importance of recognizing and addressing the broader social, cultural, and institutional contexts that shape academic environments. It emphasizes the need to go beyond surface-level interventions and tackle the deep-rooted structures and norms that reinforce gender inequality. This includes challenging implicit biases, promoting diversity in leadership positions, providing mentorship and support networks, and fostering inclusive and equitable policies and practices.

Real-world examples further illustrate the significance of the diffraction framework in understanding gender inequality in academia. By examining the experiences of women in different academic disciplines, we can identify patterns and dynamics specific to each field, uncovering unique challenges and opportunities for intervention.

To create a more equitable and inclusive academic landscape, it is imperative for institutions, policymakers, and stakeholders to embrace the diffraction framework and take concrete actions to dismantle gender barriers. This involves fostering a culture of inclusion, promoting gender-balanced representation in decision-making processes, providing equal access to resources and opportunities, and creating supportive environments that empower individuals to thrive regardless of their gender.

In exploring the possibility of systematic change, it is important to recognize the challenges that come with such transformations. While it may not always be an easy feat, history has shown that systematic change is attainable in various contexts. There have been instances where structural reforms and advancements have been achieved, paving the way for progress in different fields. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that achieving such change requires collective efforts, determination, and the identification of underlying issues and barriers. By learning from past successes and understanding the complexities involved, we can foster an environment that encourages positive and impactful transformations.

In addition to shedding light on the complexities of gender inequality and quiet quitting in academia, this research opens possibilities for future applications of the diffraction framework and intra-action theory. By embracing these theoretical tools, we can envision transformative interventions and policy changes that address systemic issues and foster more inclusive and equitable academic environments. Furthermore, this exploration prompts us to critically examine and challenge the reproduction of oppressive norms, encouraging a paradigm shift towards dismantling power structures that perpetuate inequality. As we move forward, the insights gained from this study can serve as a foundation for advancing gender equality and promoting diversity in academia, ultimately contributing to a more just and flourishing academic community for all.

Ultimately, by adopting the diffraction framework and committing to meaningful change, academia can strive towards a future where gender equality is not only a goal but a reality. It is through collective efforts and a shared commitment to dismantling gender inequalities that we can create a more just, inclusive, and flourishing academic community for all.

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Eastern European Domestic Workers and Labour Agency: A Case Study in Trento

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Abstract

Italy is experiencing a care crisis, due to demographic and economic changes, but so far the state has failed to address it. It has instead produced a series of policies of a *femonationalist* nature which channel migrant women into the domestic sector to fill this void. This research aims to investigate where the agency of migrant women lies in this context, which seems to be ruled only by structural factors. I interviewed migrant domestic workers employed, or formerly employed, in Trento in order to assess their agency, both when entering the domestic sector and once within it. The findings show that migrants acknowledge policies as a constraining element in entering the sector. In addition, migrant women showed different agency tactics depending on whether they were oriented towards *there* (their birth country), *neither here nor there* or *here*. I categorized these three groups as characterized by different demographic characteristics and, consequently, different practices.

KEYWORDS: domestic work; agency; intersectionality; femonationalism.

Introduction

In the square in front of Trento's train station, Piazza Dante, one can see an unusual statue. A tall middle-aged man is standing, his hand resting on the shoulder of a kneeling woman; sitting next to the couple, a boy and a girl are petting a dog. The plaque reads: Monument to Trento's family. Of course, the statue was welcomed with doubts and protests: to what extent is this stereotypical image still relevant in today's everchanging, globalized world? Two elements meet the eye: the paternalistic image of the *pater familias*, and the invisibilization of any racialized element of modern society. Among these invisible characteristics, one is worth noting: there is another person in

Italian society who enables that statue to exist, by taking care of its members, their needs, their house, their children and their elderly. This person is the migrant domestic worker.

This research is the result of a qualitative investigation conducted through in-depth interviews. My main research questions are:

1. What is the degree of labour agency perceived by Eastern European domestic workers upon their entrance into the care sector?

2. What is the degree of labour agency enacted and perceived by Eastern European domestic workers within the care sector?

I assessed the degree of agency experienced by migrant workers from Eastern Europe in the domestic sector vis-à-vis femonationalist policies which, I argue, channel migrant workers towards the reproductive sector to fill a care void. I also established their degree of agency within the domestic sector. In this respect, I argue that migrant domestic workers are not just passive actors being channelled towards the care sector, but that they enact a wide range of intentional practices to carve out spaces for freedom. How do they gain space for personal agency within the domestic sector? What type of practices do they enact?

Migrant workers, especially from Eastern Europe, are filling a care void, which is the result of a juncture of economic, political, social and demographic conditions. The state downsized the welfare state[1] (Ferrera and Gualmini, 2004; Greve, 2019; Goldberg and Rosenthal, 2002), neoliberalism advanced, women entered the labour market and the population rapidly aged. All of these changes resulted in a massive care drain: the state is no longer providing enough services and women, traditionally in charge of care responsibilities, no longer have the time, strength or will to do it. In Italy, the family is the main support for older people: 65.2% of the population over 65 years old receives help from family members, friends or other people, and this percentage rises to 84.4% for elderly people with severe difficulties in self-care (ISTAT, 2021). At the same time, 44.2% of the population over 65 years old and severely ill claim that there is a lack of adequate aid or assistance from the state (*ibid.*). The family is therefore the major provider of welfare for elderly family members (Saraceno, 1998). This type of care regime is called *familialistic* (Van Hooren, 2012): care is provided by the family (especially women), because state aid is not sufficient and needs to be supported by informal aid from family members. However, women are increasingly entering the labour market, households are growing smaller and more geographically scattered; thus, families can no longer shoulder the responsibility on their own. The only solution that

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[1] See more in section II.

maintains the situation of a woman taking care of an elderly person in an individualized manner while living in the same building is to employ a migrant in the family – an option that aligns well with the familialistic care regime.

I hold that the employment of migrants in Italian families is enabled by a set of policies, ideas and cultural legacies that find their justification, at least in some measure, in the ideology of femonationalism. This is a concept developed by Sara Farris (2012), it stands for 'feminist and femocratic nationalism' and refers to the instrumentalization and co-optation by nationalist right-wing parties of gender-equality-related narratives. Femonationalism is based on racist, sexist and classist stereotypes, under the pretext of saving women. A perfect example of femonationalism is offered by Italian integration policies, which claim that migrant women must be saved from the oppression of their native country and freed through waged labour by adapting to the Western female model. However, they do not really give migrant women a choice: they are confined to a residual sector, now abandoned by European women, namely care work, on the basis of stereotypes which see migrant women as docile and submissive, stereotypes that also draw from Italian colonial heritage.(Del Boca, 1992; Negash, 1987). My argument is that labour and migration policies promulgated in the Italian context under a femonationalist ideology channel migrant women into the reproductive sector, so that the state can continue to avoid providing services to citizens.

The subject is certainly multifaceted, , and not reducible to the issue of gender or race alone. For this reason, the analytical lens I have employed is an intersectional one. By intersectionality, I mean 'the interaction between systems of oppression' (Weldon, 2008, p. 193). Kimberlé Crenshaw theorized this concept while studying violence against women, and observing that those belonging to marginalized groups in terms of class and ethnicity faced more obstacles in their struggle against gender violence (Crenshaw, 1991). The peculiarity of this approach is that it does not consist of a mere addition of inequalities: the experience of a black woman is not simply worse than that of a white woman, but:

> every social position is defined by an interaction between these hierarchical systems. Speaking of gender apart from race, class, ethnicity and other divisions is inaccurate and distorting: there is no such thing as gender apart from race and class, no such thing as race apart from gender, no such thing as class apart from gender or race. (Weldon, 2008, p. 195)

It is therefore necessary to consider the matrix of inequalities that is created and how these mutually influence one another.

Setting the context

In this first section, I highlight the roots of the care void phenomenon, its bond with neoliberalism, and how feminized migration entered this scenario.

During the 1970s, the world economy shifted towards a neoliberal paradigm. The central ideological feature of neoliberalism is that 'economic, political, and social relations perform better through free choices of rational actors' (Ricotta, 2016, p. 545). Neoliberalism promotes a business- and market-friendly environment through labour deregulation, capital mobility, trade liberalization and reduced public expenditure. Wacquant stresses that neoliberalism is a transnational political project, that 'entails not the dismantling but the reengineering of the state' (Wacquant, 2012, p. 71).

This shift had a significant impact on the Italian welfare system, which underwent restructuring and cuts in order to enact neoliberal changes (Scrinzi, 2016). The state withdrew from social and sanitary services, which were increasingly privatized or taken over by non-profit organizations, especially the Catholic Church (*ibid.*). The new provision of services concerning long-term care is now poorly financed by the state; instead, the state provides direct financial allowances or tax exemptions to employers who hire a care assistant on an individual basis, in order to cover the expenses. This reconfiguration of care services produced a shift in care regimes in Italy, to a migrant-in-the-family model.

Italy – a family-oriented country with limited levels of social security – traditionally had a familialistic care regime: welfare is provided informally by family members, especially women, drawing on the fact that care work is still sexually divided and traditional gender stereotypes are deep-rooted.[2] The state is not significantly involved in the provision of care, except for the allocation of cash allowances and social pensions. Van Hooren (2012, p. 136) describes a familialistic care regime as follows:

> family members have a (legal) obligation to care for dependent relatives. Public care provision is limited and only available when the family cannot fulfil its obligation. It is subject to strong means tests and needs tests. Publicly provided cash benefits may support family care.

This is typical of Southern European countries and relies heavily on family, above all women, for reproductive care (Bettio et al., 2006; Farris and Marchetti, 2017). Public services are generally only available when all family resources have been exhausted,

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[2] The Global Gender Gap Report 2022, drawn up annually by the World Economic Forum, places Italy in 63rd place out of 146 countries, recording a worsening in the score compared to 2021.

while the private sector is quite limited and not sufficiently flexible. Italy was thus strongly affected by demographic and economic changes, such as the ageing of the population and the entrance of women into the workforce, which was not followed by a redistribution of either housework or care work. And yet, this was not matched by adequate interventions from the state. Care is regarded as the sole responsibility of the family, rooted in a long-established tradition of familial care. The failure of successive governments to respond to families' needs have resulted in a care crisis. Families can no longer rely on kinship support, while the private sector is too expensive and often unavailable; the only other options available are giving up one's own job or paying a caregiver.

According to Marchetti, the role of the state was quite problematic:

> since the 1990s, states have encouraged the marketization of care by relegating its provision to the private care providers and relying on competition among them. […] states have been able to progressively delegate to employers (that is, care receivers) a series of important commitments and responsibilities which are vital to the functioning of the system. (2022, p. 25)

Italy reformed its care systems by promoting home-based care and providing cash allowances to support households in hiring migrant women as caregivers (Van Hooren, 2012). Italy, in contrast to most European countries, organizes its social security system primarily through cash transfers rather than services: it spends more than half of the resources devoted to non-self-sufficient elderly people's care to financial transfers only, rather than services (INPS, 2022). Italy has the highest social pension expenditure as a proportion of GDP in the EU, 17.6%, while the European mean is 13.6% (Eurostat, 2023) The most important cash-for-care measure is called 'Indennità di Accompagnamento'. It was first established in 1980 to help people with severe disabilities, and its aim is to support recipients in dealing with the expenses due to their needs. It consists of a fixed monthly payment, the same amount for each recipient, regardless of income. Over the last 20 years, it has experienced unprecedented growth and diffusion, thus increasing its overall expenditure (Network Non Autosufficienza, 2010). Much of Italy's expenditure on long-term care is absorbed by this single measure: 46% is dedicated to IdA (Network Non Autosufficienza, 2021). Another important measure complements the cash-for-care allowance scenario: local cash allowances ('assegni di cura'). This monetary transfer is not available at the national level but is provided by local entities such as regions or provinces to non-self-sufficient people to support them in dealing with care expenditure. Similarly to the IdA, it has expanded in the new millennium and is allocated regardless of income (Network Non Autosufficienza, 2009).

These arrangements are defined by Ungerson (1997, p. 369) as 'routed wages': 'the systems in which care users are given the means to employ caregivers directly in an employer-employee relationship'. The amount of money destined for care-users is intended to be exactly enough to employ migrant caregivers. Even though states have withdrawn from being direct providers of care, they are still managing and influencing how care is provided.

Italy thus shifted from a familialistic care regime to a 'migrant in the family' one (Bettio et al., 2006). This initially emerged as a cost-effective solution, employing migrant female caregivers who work long hours for low wages (Farris and Marchetti, 2017). Most importantly, it enabled the continuation of a gendered division of labour within the familialistic care regime. This regime is imbued with deep normative conceptions about the sexual division of care duties. What makes this new model acceptable is its adherence to the traditional organization of labour and care. Delegating care duties to another person is socially acceptable only to the extent that it confirms institutionalized gender constructions.

Feminization of migration

The feminization of migration describes 'the increase in the percentage of women in international migration' (Marchetti, 2018, p. 444). It is the result of multiple factors, including 'immigration legislation, gender-selective demand for foreign labour, and changing gender relations in countries of origin' (Carling, 2005, p. 2). But the real difference is *how* they are migrating: 'women are increasingly migrating as solo or pioneer migrants, in long distance movements, as workers and thus with the function of breadwinner for their households' (Marchetti, 2018, p. 445). Female migrants are now pursuing migration patterns that, in the past, were typically male. But the jobs that women are finding in the Global North have nothing to do with traditional male employment. They are being employed as domestic workers to perform those tasks that neither the state nor women nor, even more so, men are willing to undertake. This trend has been described in numerous ways, but the most compelling might be Ehrenreich and Hochschild's (2002): developed countries are now, paradoxically, dependent on migrants from LDCs for child, house, and elderly care. In many ways, this relation resembles the one existing traditionally between the sexes:

the First World takes on a role like that of the old-fashioned male in the family – pampered, entitled, unable to cook, clean, or find his socks. Poor countries take on a role like that of the traditional woman within the family – patient, nurturing, and self-denying. (*ibid.*, p. 12)

A sexual global division of labour is in place.

Social and demographic transformations

If we look at Italy's age pyramid, it shows the classic signs of negative growth (Decimo, 2015). The proportion of elderly and non-self-sufficient people is growing and the replacement rate is completely inadequate. Coupling this with the steady arrival of migrants ever since the 1990s, and the feminization of this migration, means that female migrant workers have found fertile soil in the need for domestic workers.

Moreover, women's employment has seen steady growth since 1977. But we should also look at *how* women are working. There is a growing proportion of women in career-structured jobs: they take on more responsibilities and thus the penalties for taking a break are much more severe (Cox, 2006). Women in professional occupations are also exposed to the so-called long hours and presenteeism cultures, which means 'the need to be seen at your desk for longer and longer durations' (*ibid.*, p. 39). These attitudes towards work are shaped by men's lives and work patterns, which do not entail traditionally female care duties. They make balancing work and household responsibilities complicated, if not impossible: women are required to work longer and unpredictable hours and to devote total commitment to their company. The inevitable result is the outsourcing of domestic work to another person.

Domestic work and social reproduction

Defining domestic work is a problematic endeavour. It is so much more than physical chores: 'people are social, cultural and ideological beings, not just units of labour. […] Reproductive work – mental, physical and emotional labour – creates not simply labour units, but people' (Anderson, 2000, p. 13). By reproductive labour I am referring to the material, symbolic and relational work needed for the creation and recreation through time of people as cultural, social and physical beings (Marchetti, 2022; Glenn, 1992). It involves mental, emotional and manual labour to maintain existing life and produce the next generation (Laslett and Brenner, 1989). What mostly defines

domestic work is the private house as workplace, the primary feature that bars domestic workers from labour rights and common protection (Marchetti, 2022).

Reproductive labour is a gendered form of work and central to it is female oppression. Historically, labour has been sexually separated: reproductive labour was the prerogative of women, while men were assigned to productive labour. Social reproduction was (and still is) a normative and moral obligation for women, exacerbated by cultural and religious perspectives holding that women have a natural predisposition to a field deemed inferior to men's. It is assumed to be an unskilled job, easy to do, trivial when compared to men's endeavours in public life. Although perceived as socially useful, it lacks societal recognition as a real job because it is gendered and normally women do it for free; it thus carries no prestige.

> Housework was not degrading because it was manual labor, as Friedan thought, but because it was embedded in degrading relationships and inevitably served to reinforce them. To make a mess that another person will have to deal with […] is to exert domination in one of its more silent and intimate forms. (Ehrenreich, 2002, p. 88)

The gendered nature of domestic work stems from the fact that it reproduces and actually *does* gender. Housework is 'a symbolic enactment of gender relations' (*ibid.*). Because it consists of activities generally associated with femininity, and requires skills and emotional and psychological attributes traditionally linked to women, it actively produces and reproduces gender through the carrying out of its activities. Domestic work preserves society's gender order by reminding men and women, through their repeated day-to-day actions and interactions, what is masculine and what is feminine.

The redistribution of domestic work within the household has occurred only to the extent to which it no longer concerns either of the two partners, but involves a third party, a non-member of the household. Italian women no longer perform care duties as they used to, but no real progress has actually been made: domestic work remains in female hands, but those of another, poorer, racialized woman, who acts as a substitute for the wife. The burden has just been passed through a racialized line to a lower rung of the ladder. The old system of the sexual division of labour is thus maintained and reproduced (Lutz, 2011; Marchetti, 2022; Andall, 2000). Domestic work provides the perfect lens for examining the intersection of different systems of inequality. To be sure, women perform more domestic work than men, but at the same time low-class, poor, racialized and migrant women fulfil these reproductive duties more often.

Not just another job

The first important element of domestic work is that the private house is the workplace. According to Marxist theory, the house thus becomes a full-fleshed capitalist workplace (Ehrenreich, 2002). Caregivers work in the space that maintains and displays the status of their employer, a place that is normally intimate, private and interdicted. Homes are 'the location of a long series of unspoken routines that the women had to respect in full' (Cvajner, 2019, p. 35). Even the smallest changes can disrupt this fragile order. When, naturally, routines are not followed, this is perceived as a violation. There is another consequence of the house being a private and closed space: migrant workers are particularly liable to suffer abuse in the workplace, to be isolated and to be excluded from common protection and rights, because controls are quite unusual in such an intimate place.

Another peculiar aspect is physical and emotional proximity. Many jobs entail human contact, but hardly ever in such an intimate way or requiring such considerable emotional commitment. What is most often implicitly required is attentiveness, keeping company, offering emotional support and providing the only human contact that some patients receive (Ambrosini, 2012; Marchetti, 2022). The costs that migrant workers might bear are also psychological. This 'intimate work' (Lutz, 2011) is performed in a personalized way that suits the symbolic and material demands of the employers, and as a result is highly demanding and emotionally charged. Caring work is invisible and thus the skills required to do it are not acknowledged (Glenn, 1992).

Employers often believe that they are purchasing the entire time of the worker; thus, there is no task that is not part of the job during that window of time. When caregivers live and work in the house of the employer, no amount of time is regarded as uniquely for themselves, not even sleeping time at night, because they might be called to care for children or sick people. They have no control over their hours. It is not just a matter of long hours: they are constantly available, always on call (Anderson, 2000), which is the element that most thoroughly enslaves their freedom to the will (and whims) of their employer. The consequences of having almost no freedom are reflected in their psychological well-being and make them susceptible to abuse.

Femonationalist policies

In this section, I analyse the migration and integration policies that enabled the segregation of migrant women in the care sector. Since the refugee crisis of 2015, nationalist right-wing and far-right-wing parties have been on the rise in Europe

(Nourbakhsh et al., 2022; Halikiopoulou and Vlandas, 2019; Inglehart and Norris, 2016), but one of the most striking differences from the right-wing parties of the past is their explicit references to gender-equality issues. Women's rights have become central to their agendas, and the language of women's rights has been applied to anti-immigration policies (Farris, 2017). However, nationalist right-wing parties have a traditional antifeminist core, which clashes with this recent concern for equality. As the general political landscape has shifted to the right, these parties have tried to normalize their public image by harnessing women's rights, showing concern for their safety, which is allegedly threatened by non-western male migrants. A new instrument for political climbing was created by the nationalist right: femonationalism. This was theorized by Sara Farris, who defines it as: 'the attempts of western European right-wing parties and neoliberals to advance xenophobic and racist politics through the touting of gender equality' (Farris, 2017, p. 3). The femonationalist project is implemented practically in migration and integration policies, which devote particular attention to migrant women and claim a desire to increase their participation in the labour market. But these policies are actually confining them to the most racialized, feminized, low-status and low-paid sector, to fill a care void that the state has not properly addressed (Sager and Mulinari, 2018). They claim the liberation of women through work, but they are actually requiring migrant women to undertake 'precisely the work from which western European feminists wanted to escape: namely, social reproductive labor' (Farris, 2017, p. 137).

Femonationalist rhetoric and policies address very concrete economic and political interests. They resolve an inner contradiction of neoliberalism: it desperately needs reproductive work but, at the same time, does not value it, in fact despises it. By institutionalizing femonationalism, the reproductive sphere can be reorganized, and migrant women play a fundamental role in this. Non-western women allow Europeans to remain productive in the public sphere, while ensuring the housework is done. Through claiming to protect the traditional family, and despite campaigns against illegal immigrants in Italy, nationalist parties have 'not only closed an eye towards the general practice of hiring "illegal" migrant women as carers and domestic workers in private households but has even implemented concrete policies for their regularisation and recruitment' (Farris & Scrinzi, 2018, p. 18). In so doing, they have pragmatically accommodated the current Italian crisis of social reproduction.

Migration policies

Italy is channelling migrant women into the domestic sector, filling a void that the state has failed to address. Although the state is no longer providing services, instead

delegating individuals to purchase them in the market, in tune with the neoliberal reconfiguration of the state, it has nonetheless maintained close control over how those services are provided. Indeed, Italian policies seem to encourage the demand for a foreign workforce in the domestic sector. Repeated mass regularizations of undocumented migrants, in which domestic workers have received preferential treatment, are the clearest example of this (Di Bartolomeo and Marchetti, 2016). They are generally implemented every few years and attract thousands of applications, which must be issued by the migrant's employer. Regularizations constitute the pillar of Italian migration policies and 'they are deeply embedded in the political culture and organisational structure of the Italian state. Regularizations have often been carried out in several other fields, most of which were in the building sector or to reduce tax evasion' (Finotelli and Arango, 2011, p. 500). The major ones were carried out between 1986 and 2012, and after an unusual eight-year pause, another one was enacted in 2020. They were always presented as exceptional measures and repeatedly proved inadequate, leading to a situation of 'permanent social emergency' (Woodcock, 2010). The last four regularizations (2002, 2009, 2012, 2020) directly targeted domestic workers and Eastern European migrants. Nationalist right-wing parties played a major role in securing mass regularizations, despite their firm anti-immigration agenda. Remarkably, amnesties from 2002, the largest one, and 2009, reserved for domestic and care workers only, were heavily sponsored by well-known anti-migrant and even xenophobic parties and ministers. While immigration policies in general became more rigid, exceptions of exceptions were made for domestic workers: dedicated annual quotas; preferential treatment in regularizations; special work permits. These policies attempted to address the massive presence of migrants employed in private households, but also to accommodate the market's demand for caregivers and preserve the traditional familialistic care regime.

Integration policies

Femonationalism requires migrant women to work and be economically independent in order to free themselves, but at the same time it allows them to work only in the care sector. According to Farris, 'nowhere else as within these policies, in fact, is the femonationalist ideological formation more plainly presented as a narrative of rescue targeting migrant women according to a nationalist register' (Farris, 2017, p. 82). Below, I briefly focus on three projects, financed by the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals[3], 'KNE – Knowledge Network Estero'; 'E-

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[3] This is one of the funds that finances national, transnational and EU-level actions to facilitate the integration of non-EU citizens, targeting recent arrivals in particular. Up to €825 million have been made available for the period 2007–2013 to cover such areas. The full text is available at:

Work. Ingresso legale e inclusione sociale delle donne immigrate a Caserta' and the 'Care Assistants Search Agency' (CASA). All of them explicitly mention directing migrant women towards the care sector as one of their key objectives.

'E-work' aims to 'activate professional orientation measures for immigrant women in the province of Caserta, in order to adapt their skills to the needs expressed by the local labor market, in particular in the personal care and catering sectors' (Ministero dell'Interno, 2007, p. 10). Once again, migrant women are diverted towards the care sector to satisfy the national needs of the market, based on racist and sexist expectations. 'KNE' courses, in contrast, are provided in Rome and 'concern the sectors of construction, carpentry, mechanical and welding workshop, food, bakery, catering and pizzeria, horticulture, familiar assistance' (*ibid.*, p. 12). Migrants do not seem to be even considered for any jobs other than physical, low-skilled, low-waged ones. Finally, the CASA report explicitly acknowledges that native citizens refuse to be employed in the care sector, but wish that migrant women would step in to fill these gaps:

> As many of them are of working age they could be the additional labour supply for professions or sectors encountering recruitment difficulties. This situation occurs in the long-term care sector, where there is an increasing number of vacant jobs which confirms the undesirability of jobs in a sector which are usually low paid, have unsociable hours, and low social status. As a consequence, these jobs are not absorbed by local workforce. Immigration from third countries has the potential to fill future carers shortages. (CASA, 2007, p. 6)

Although the explicit aim of the project is to help migrant women find 'better jobs', it is equally explicitly stated that they are being channelled towards those jobs that Europeans do not want, as they are poorly paid and characterized by low social status.

Methods and empirical data

I conducted 20 in-depth interviews during the months of December 2022 and January 2023 while working at Trento's Centre of Employment. Qualitative research, and in-depth interviews specifically, provided me with an adequate understanding of the informants' perspectives on their lives and agency in their own words. I tried to 'assume the perspective of the people whose lives are being examined' (Morawska, 2018, p. 114) through an effort of empathy. The choice of interviewing as the main in-field method

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https://www1.interno.gov.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/assets/files/21/0180_Volumetto_FEI-ANCI-DEF.pdf

is linked to my population of interest: migrant women in the care and domestic sector, who constitute a vulnerable group.

> The interview as a method helps not only to access migrant populations (mostly women) working in the shadows of private homes and closed care-institutions, but also, importantly, helps to untangle the meaning and practice of love and caring mix with power and agency in the labour-for-money exchange that characterizes this job sector, one that is usually hidden from the public gaze. (Fedyuk and Zentai, 2018, p. 176)

I consider that my identity as a woman might have been an advantage in interviewing other women and creating a sense of reciprocal trust, as we were delving into sensitive matters. At the same time, implying that informants would be more willing to answer to people similar to them in terms of gender entails the risk of essentialism, considering these features as inherently shaping a specific worldview. I was studying a group of which I was not a member, if we consider the trajectory of life as a migrant and a non-native Italian. It is important to be aware of what this might entail for the results. For instance, subjects might have toned down their criticism towards Italian employers as I may have been perceived as one of them, or they might have failed to report episodes of racism when I asked if they had ever experienced one.

Reflecting on my positionality, I recognize that the nature of my research was explicitly influenced by the feminist standpoint tenet of 'giving voice' to marginalized and vulnerable groups and prioritizing their experiences. The risk might be to represent the respondents' voices as though they spoke on their own; rather, I want to stress that the voices I report are the result of choices of interpretation and a process of negotiation located within a relational complex of power and identity features, read through my personal lens.

Empirical data

I delimited my population of interest to migrant women employed, or formerly employed, in the care and domestic sector in Trento. More specifically, migrant women native to Eastern European countries that have at least 25,000 inhabitants in Italy. The choice of categorizing according to country of birth in selecting the population of interest is crucial and entails power decisions. Categories are the product of a political and social context; thus, they are not fixed, and are shaped by the conceptualizations we hold about a country and existing power relations. To assume that migrants from a specific country form an ethnic group that should be prioritized and that defines them before their identity, entails many risks, including reification and essentialism (Jacobs, 2018). Stereotypes and racialization might be reinforced. Qualitative research can avoid

methodological nationalism, however: the in-depth interview extends far beyond the simple country of birth and focuses on the individual experience of the informant, attempting to adopt the perspective of the other.

Given the criteria that delimited my population of interest, I decided upon purposeful sampling: 'the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research' (Patton, 2001, p. 230). The cases were identified beforehand on a conceptual basis. The aim is to gain an in-depth understanding through the selection of cases that will shed light on the research questions. Purposeful sampling seemed relevant to my case because my research is focused on a specific group. Hence, I chose criterion sampling, whose logic 'is to review and study all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance. […] All cases in the data system that exhibit certain predetermined criterion characteristics are routinely identified for in-depth, qualitative analysis' (*ibid.*, p. 238).

Firstly, I identified the criteria I needed my sample to have, and then I selected and contacted all the cases that met those requirements in the Centre of Employment's records. The total number of interviews is 20, but I did not know what it would be at the beginning of the research, I only set a deadline for the first week of January 2023 due to time constraints. The key and ideal criterion that delimited the number of cases was the saturation of knowledge. This means 'that further data collection would not provide relevant results to the themes, concepts, codes or theory. In other words, we search for cases as the research proceeds and we stop sampling when we find no deviant cases anymore' (Barglowski, 2018, p. 153). Once I reached a certain degree of redundancy, having explored different cases that covered various issues and no new information seemed to be emerging, I decided to stop. To be sure, saturation was an ideal benchmark that I only achieved to a limited extent, because I do not believe that in the empirical world new cases cannot yield any new information.

My sample turned out to be mainly composed of women in their 60s; most of them had been living in Italy for around 20 years, arriving at the beginning of the new millennium. Seven were from Moldova, six from Ukraine, three from Russia, three from Romania and one from Albania. All of them had at least one child, half were married, while the others were either divorced or widowed. Eight had graduated from university, two had a middle-school diploma while the rest had a high-school diploma. All of them had already worked in their home country, but none in the care and domestic sector, although many of them had cared for their elderly parents, younger siblings or other relatives. The privacy and anonymity of the respondents is guaranteed by the use of pseudonyms and the omission of any information that could be traced back to the individual.

All the interviews were conducted in Italian and manually transcribed at a later time. I translated into English only the quotations that I decided to include in the analysis as exemplifications. When transcribing, I tried to record the words of the informants as faithfully as possible. Most the interviewees had a fairly good to excellent proficiency in Italian. Nonetheless, there were some grammatical inaccuracies that I transcribed as such, in order to remain true to their words and their way of speaking. However, I decided to smooth the language when necessary in the presentation of the data. I also omitted verbal mannerisms when repeated. I consider that this posed two main challenges. At a deeper level, I was interviewing non-native Italian speakers: this had a great impact on their way of talking, their use of words and their linguistic creativity. At a more observable level, my interventions in transcribing and then translating their accounts inevitably influenced, changed and erased some of the authenticity of their words. Yet, the effects of these obstacles are limited since the aim of this research was not linguistic analysis. Moreover, in line with the conceptualization of the researcher as playing an active role, the act of transcribing is already an interpretative one, where meaning and knowledge are created, it is not just a mechanical act.

Analytical Method: Thematic Analysis

The analytical method I used is thematic analysis. This consists of 'a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 6). This method actively seeks themes and general patterns across the entire dataset. I conducted the analysis using the software QdA Miner, which allowed me to create a codebook, to encode different sections of the dataset and, eventually, to observe the connections revealed.

There are multiple reasons why I chose thematic analysis. Firstly, its flexibility: it is not informed by a specific theoretical framework, thus it can address most types of qualitative research questions and analyse most types of qualitative data (Braun, Clarke and Terry, 2015). Secondly, thematic analysis is perfectly in line with the assumptions that guided both my research process in conducting the interviews and the transcription, i.e., the conceptualization of the researcher as an active agent. This active role applies to the analysis as well. The researcher is at the very centre of the process of knowledge production. Themes are not simply discovered throughout the text, just waiting for the researcher to uncover them. The analysis is anything but a passive process. The researcher does not only identify the themes relevant to her research question, but themes are 'analytic outputs developed through and from the creative labour of our coding. They reflect considerable analytic "work," and are actively created by the researcher at the intersection of data, analytic process and subjectivity' (Braun

and Clarke, 2019, p. 6). If themes are consciously produced by the researcher and are not pre-formed concepts that she plucks out of the data, then we should not worry about a pre-formed truth that we might be missing (Braun and Clarke, 2016). Thirdly, I valued the crucial role played by reflexivity and positionality in thematic analysis. Since the researcher is an active producer of meaning, she ought to be mindful of her theoretical assumptions, of the need to make decisions during the analysis and actively own them, and of the creative and interpretative process that develops themes pertinent to the research questions. For this reason, the analytical process is circular: there is constant communication between data, analysis and theory, with a continuous questioning of the assumptions that inform the creation of codes and the interpretation of data.

Analysis

When I started the interviews, I was mainly focused on the participants' agency in deciding whether or not to enter the care sector, despite the complex grid of constraints that strongly limits their ability to choose. As the interviews progressed, I realized that the real locus where labour agency was deployed was *within* the domestic sector.

I used an intersectional lens of analysis. As Ambrosini (2020) points out, migrant women are affected by triple discrimination, as women, as migrants and as domestic workers. Highly stereotypical labels and images are attached to them, which narrow down their employment opportunities and increase the stickiness of the domestic sector. It was self-evident that 'the interaction between systems of oppression' (Weldon, 2008, p. 193) had to be taken into consideration. It is crucial to consider the matrix of inequalities that arises, and how these are mutually influential. Ignoring such intersections mostly benefits the experiences of already-privileged groups. Power relations of gender, class and ethnicity cast migrant women into a vulnerable position, liable to exploitation. At the same time, this does not preclude them from exerting agency, as they strategically channel their resources, which are often limited in terms of material and social capital, to meet their most compelling priorities. They enact low-key, hardly visible practices in the spaces they have crafted within unequal power relationships in order to turn things around. While structural factors channel their agency, these do not entirely control it (Erel, 2007; Rydzik and Sundari, 2020). The focus is on women's labour agency, situated in a context of gendered, racialized and stratified relationships, and this calls for an intersectional analytical tool.

Entering the sector

In this section, I present the multitude of factors that, in various ways, channelled the interviewees into the domestic sector. This is not to say that they are deprived of labour agency, but rather to acknowledge the intersection of unequal relations within which they are enmeshed.

Policy Constraints

The impact of policies was actually confirmed by the interviewees. Some had chosen to move to Italy because it was perceived to be easier in terms of paperwork and bureaucracy. Daryna, a 40-year-old Ukrainian woman, moved to Italy when she was only 22, and clearly stated that one of the reasons was how easy it was to get a visa.

> *Daryna*. The embassy was issuing visas. Italy had really opened up more, it was collecting workers.
> *Gaia*. So it was easier to go to Italy than to other countries?
> *Daryna*. Yes, it was easier getting a visa for Italy.

In other cases, the employers themselves had asked them to come to Italy and took care of the residence permit. For example, Victoria, a 42-year-old Moldovan woman, moved to Italy because a family sponsored her. Emilia, 63 years old, got her permit instead by accessing the 2002 regularization, while Nina, 59 years old, accessed the 2008 regularization, which was dedicated to domestic workers only. The way in which residence permits are structured also limits immigrants' career choices and increases their vulnerability. Daryna and Karina, both 63 years old, explained their fear of losing their residence permit because it requires work regularity. So, being employed as live-in carers seemed the safest and quickest choice. They had looked for jobs only in the sector already open to immigrant women, as they did not have the time to look for other positions matching their educational level. Moreover, even though when I interviewed them they all had regular status, most had worked without a permit at some point in the past. The irregular market of the care sector was thus the safest choice: on the one hand, a large proportion of contracts in the care sector are irregular, so they would be entering an environment ready to welcome irregular migrants. On the other hand, working as a live-in carer allowed them to get work, accommodation and food all at once. Thus, policy structure can play a role in channelling migrant women towards the care and domestic sector. However, it is just one piece of the puzzle in a greater picture and does not exhaust the matter.

Economic Constraints

The main reason migrant women acknowledged as channelling them towards the domestic sector was related to economic constraints. They had migrated to earn enough money to sustain their families, thus almost all of their wage was sent back to their birth country as remittances. One should add to this the debts incurred during the journey, which they wanted to repay as soon as possible. Being in such a vulnerable situation, in an unknown country with few social contacts, they had accepted the first job offered to them. Stenning and Dawley (2009) call this the 'work first' motivation of migrants: as they are looking for an immediate income, they do not wait for employment that rewards them.

Although migration patterns are connected to economic inequalities, this is just one side of it. The women I interviewed come from middle-income countries, rather than extremely poor ones. According to Clemens (2014), for the most part people migrate from neither poor nor rich countries, but rising ones. Moreover, people who migrate, like the participants in my interviews, are generally middle class: you need material, social and human resources to leave your own country, so the poorest strata of society are normally not as interested in migration processes (De Haas, 2007). It is fundamental to stress background economic scenarios, but this does not explain the issue of migrants channelled to the domestic sector.

Future orientation

Expecting to go back to one's home country or stay in the receiving one influences the choice of employment. All the interviewees had originally expected to stay only a couple of years in Italy to earn enough money. Their investment in time and resources in Italy was thus limited. When searching for a job of limited duration, this must support the reason for migrating in the first place, namely earning money. Therefore, migrant women do not spend much time looking for a job in line with their previous employment or education, nor do they spend time and money on training courses. Their first years in Italy are usually spent as live-in carers in order to maximize their income. As Anastasiya, a 62-year-old Moldovan woman, states, in hindsight, those first few years in Italy seem crucial: 'I should have studied more when I arrived here when I was 40, taken some courses, I don't know, even OSS, work shifts… more ordinary jobs'. The concept of path dependency explains the situation experienced by the migrants: small past events, even if no longer relevant, can have significant consequences in the present and constrain the structure of possibilities. Incidents, new and old problems all start adding up, one after the other, and the years seem to pass

without one noticing. Most of the interviewees reported this feeling of time slipping through their fingers without them realizing it.

Education

Almost half of the participants had university degrees and had previously held highly-skilled jobs. However, they now occupy low-waged and gendered jobs, and they are more exposed to exploitation. All migrants experience deskilling; for example, because they lack language skills. But women are disproportionately affected by it. Moreover, the process of recognizing diplomas is extremely difficult and expensive in Italy, without any assurance that it would have improved their condition. For example, Veronika is a 39-year-old Russian woman, she has a degree in architecture and used to work as a civil engineer, a job she really enjoyed. She actually got her diploma recognized, but Russian degrees are not accepted in Italy.

Network Constraints

All the interviewees stated that they had found a job in the care sector because they knew someone already working in it. Pre-existing migrant settlements therefore diminish migration-associated risks and expenses. Access to the job market is thus conditioned by a migrant's network: they are most likely to be introduced into the same niche and will end up working in the same sector. The structure of possibilities is thus curtailed. Kesi, a 42-year-old woman from Albania, who works as a live-out carer and is looking for a new job, is deeply aware of this.

> I'd like to change, but it isn't easy cos it always goes through connections. […] It isn't easy, you must have connections, it's not even that you give them money, but connections in the good sense of the word, the person who's already inside the sector helps me in finding a job, they know me, that I'm friendly, I'll talk to anyone….

Migrants are thus embedded within social relations, which shape their decisions and their opportunities for action. The choice to enter the domestic market is not dictated only by economic calculations, but is also shaped by the previous experiences of family or friends, by the presence of support networks and by information fluxes. One should not be tempted, however, to consider social networks only as traps that constrain migrant women within the domestic sector. The role of support networks is invaluable for migrants. After a long, stressful and painful journey, after leaving their home country, their family and friends, migrant women find themselves in an unknown country: they do not know the language, they do not know how to find a job, they do

not know where to go or where to sleep, sometimes they do not even know where they are. Karina recounts her arrival in Italy: the coach was supposed to take her to Salerno, where her relatives were working, but instead left her in Venice with only a train ticket.

> We got out like little mice, we got off this bus and they told us 'you're on your own'. I was so stressed I can't even explain. If you don't know… only one thing, they got us tickets and with this ticket I was supposed to go to Salerno, but I didn't know the words, I didn't know anything. I could maybe ask a question using a book, but if they answer, where should I look? It was so stressful, I got to Rome and I didn't have a mobile phone, anything, you know it was very difficult. I went to a phone box, I phoned Cristina, my mother's cousin, I said: 'Oxana, what should I do?' You know, Oxana had to go back because her free day was over… she was supposed to go back to work, she says 'I can't come and get you, go to Battipaglia and Lucia will come and fetch you'. When I arrived it was already dark, autumn, October. When I arrived in Battipaglia and I saw Lucia under the clock, my soul came back to my body.

Gender Constraints

Gender stereotypes and obligations also play a key role. Women are educated to be closer to their families: the very decision to migrate is often the result of persistent moral obligations. The magnitude of the remittances sent home to their families bears witness to the strong link connecting a woman to her household. But gender identity also emerges in the very nature of domestic work: such as a flexible job, that allows one to interrupt tasks when needed, and being performed inside a private house, it matches the care burden women must carry, especially childminding. Domestic work is flexible, and working hours can be changed informally quite quickly: therefore, the choice of work often falls on this sector because it is the only one that allows women to combine earning a wage and taking intensive care of the household. The following is an extract from the interview with Victoria, who is married with three children. It is a compelling explanation of the complex intersection of care work and care duties and the way in which they shape women's agency.

> *Gaia*. Ever since you arrived in Italy, in which sector have you sought employment? What did you desire when you were searching?

> *Victoria*. What did I desire… mostly I couldn't…. at least I wasn't able to… integrate myself into other sectors cos I was forced to raise this child cos my husband was always working, he was hardly ever there. So, it was me who spent more time with this kid because the father had to leave early in the morning, and came back late in the evening. So I had to do pretty much everything by myself. So, working with families helps me in some ways because… because I don't know if I could have working hours… facilitated

working hours … I don't know how to explain it, sometimes I would even take him with me, I mean there were families who let me when he was… not when he was sick, but when I couldn't take him [to the nursery], maybe during holidays, so I was more… facilitated with the timetables. So I wasn't able to integrate, I don't know maybe in a shop. I've always wanted to change but… having… I had constrictions in this sense.

This conversation highlights the interlocking of different inequality systems: the care burden, the absence of the male spouse, and withdrawal from the formal job market to enter a more informal one. The care sector ends up being the only possible solution to guarantee both an income for the family and its domestic care. Victoria's words summarize the Hobson's choice in which they are caught: 'I see it like that, I couldn't integrate or do anything because I had to provide for the family. I know it sounds bad'.

Inside the Sector

In this section, I present the many ways in which women renegotiated the terms of their job, gained initiative spaces – realm within society where individuals have the capacity to make decisions, take actions, and demonstrate personal initiative – or made their working conditions somewhat better and more suited to their needs. In short, how they enacted labour agency. These practices were mostly short-term survival 'tactics' rather than 'strategies': 'ad hoc by nature, their impact is individualised and often internal, focusing on recuperation of dignity and self-worth' (Rydzik and Sundari, 2020, p. 891). I noticed that labour agency changed according to the interviewees' long-term goals, and their consequent priorities and degrees of social integration. I identified three orientations: those who wanted to go back *there*, to their birth country; those who did not know whether to go back *there* or stay *here*; and those who had no doubts about staying *here*, in Italy.

To analyse the data, I adopted Katz's (2004) conceptualization of agency as made up of practices of resilience, reworking and resistance. With resilience practices, workers try to adapt to their environment, not change it, and ensure daily survival. The main objective 'is autonomous initiative, recuperation, or resilience' (Katz, 2004, p. 242). Some examples of resilience in the interviews are 'Extra work' – doing more tasks than required and staying longer hours to make a good impression on employers – or, in contrast, 'Enforcing the contract', when the worker sticks closely to what is written on the employment contract to avoid any extra work that does not fall within her responsibilities. These are both practices that are enacted within the boundaries of the job relation and respect its conditions.

If they instead adopt reworking practices, agents recognize the exploitative relationships in which they are enmeshed, but do not try to challenge them; rather, they attempt to reorganize those restrictions that affect everyday life. For example, one reworking practice was 'Doing courses', studying to be able to change their sector of employment in order to work in a more satisfying environment. Another was 'Quitting', changing the workplace to avoid unsatisfying or exploitative working conditions. However, quitting takes place within the boundaries of the system, it does not call into question hegemonic relations, it simply allows the worker to exit one set of exploitative relationships to enter into a similar one, hoping it will be more acceptable.

Finally, resistance practices try to 'to resist, subvert, or disrupt these conditions of exploitation and oppression' (*ibid.*, p. 242). They imply a greater degree of awareness of exploitative systems: not simply individual anger or frustration, but the determination to build a new system. The crucial point is indeed arriving at the consciousness 'of being a class not simply in itself, but for itself through a recognition of the social relations of position' (*ibid.*). Acts of resistance are indeed rarer, due to the awareness required, as well as the costs, time and risk of possible retaliation.

There

Orientation towards *there* implies the desire to return to one's home country as soon as possible. Four out of the 20 women I interviewed fall into this category. They are all over 60 years old, generally dissatisfied with their current job and suffering from its physical and psychological conditions. They used to work in low-skilled jobs in their home country, as blue-collar workers or housewives; their families did not follow them to Italy. Most importantly, they do not feel as though they have integrated into the environment, they seem not to like Italy and they had a hard time adapting to it. Iryina, for example, who has been living in Italy for 22 years, stressed that she 'unfortunately' had to stay here even though she had planned to stay for just a brief period. She strongly desires to go back to Ukraine as soon as possible: 'I'm going right away cos I'm already fed up with Italy and Italians busting my chops'.

These women originally moved to Italy due to economic or family reasons, and perceived that their life conditions had become worse. Polina explained that she was staying for the wage: 'I can't say I'm happy. There's a part, how do you say, of happiness. If I earn, to earn one month's wages, I have to work in Ukraine the whole year. This gives me the strength to stay here'. They only use practices of resilience and reworking, but these are quite limited from a numerical point of view. Thus, they have little or no interest in investing any resources, financial, material or social, in Italy. Instead, they direct their resources strategically towards their highest priority: returning

to their families in their birth country. It would not make much sense to invest a great deal of energy or time in improving their current living conditions if they expect to leave in a few years. Their tactics therefore will not include an active search for their employer's approval; rather, they will only do what is required by the contract. The most frequently used tactic in this group is 'Enforcing the contract'. Iryina explained clearly what she meant by this.

> *Iryina*. I've learned over many years that… where my job lies. Cos, little by little, and do this and do that…. But I say 'no, not this'. I'm a carer and I do my job and that's it. *Gaia*. Has it ever happened that they asked you to do tasks that were not your job? *Iryina*. Yes; for example, the gym with the madam, but I say no, I'm not a physiotherapist. Or injections… syringes, for example. No, that's not my job, I'm not a nurse. Cos there's a lot of responsibility, and if I make a mistake…

Although they might be quite passive compared to the other groups, these women proved to be quite active in the ways in which they tried to enforce the contract. For example, Lilia, 65 years old, used to work as a carer for a woman whose daughter owned a hotel and restaurant. The daughter often asked Lilia to help with chores in the restaurant's kitchen; on top of that, she did not pay her regularly. Lilia decided to turn to the lady's son, who resolved the situation for her. The tactic of 'enforcing the contract' further underlines domestic workers' agency: they are trying to subvert the employers' belief that hiring a carer means buying every minute of her time. In this way, they are stating that they do not accept being treated as though their time is at the full disposal of their employers.

The most frequently used reworking practice is 'Quitting'. This is also connected to contract enforcement: after one year, Lilia decided to quit because she was being asked to undertake more tasks than she was supposed to and was not being paid according to the contract. Polina described her criterion for deciding when to quit:

> If they force me to do something I don't want to, […], if I disagree, I don't do it. I'd rather quit. Better or worse for me, but I won't do it. Either this or…. I might be bad and ugly but I don't do it.

This is closely linked is the tactic of 'preserving physical or mental health'. By this, I mean leaving a job or fighting within the current one to get better physical and psychological conditions. Polina again: 'If I see that I can't do this job, it's better for me to leave rather than… become aggressive, and do it against my will, with these people'. The choice to leave a live-in arrangement for a live-out one might be dictated by the search for 'flexibility and autonomy', meaning the desire to have one's own space and time. These women do not want to stay in Italy for the rest of their lives, but this

does not mean they intend to sacrifice their wellbeing, or their autonomy. Money is the priority, but it does not overshadow the need for dignity and comfort. They do not just accept any kind of job, but only those that comply with at least basic requirements.

Neither here nor there

This group is characterized by considerable indecisiveness about whether to go back there or stay here. The women in this group are in their late 40s, they have a family here, they all left a job they very much liked in their own country, being forced to leave due to economic hardship and/or family problems. They feel that they had little or no control over the decision to migrate. They are all quite dissatisfied with their current jobs, which they perceive as a loss of status. Below, Vera expresses her desire to go back to Moldova, but she is also aware of the problems this entails. First of all, she is frightened by the Russian war against Ukraine, which shares a long border with Moldova. Secondly, she has a young son who is attending school in Italy.

> Even if I wanted to go back to Moldova, it's not easy, with the job, the money, and this war right next to us and… but here in Italy I'd like a job that I enjoy more, have a more convenient work schedule, but it's not possible, cos the child is in school, you take him, go get him, then maybe he's sick…

These women experience great indecisiveness, which is reflected, to some extent, in the agency tactics they employ. They feel stuck, they cannot decide where to go, so the way in which they enact their agency is also affected. 'Adaptation', the process by which workers try to adapt to different and unknown situations in order to fit better in the work environment and with their employers, is widely used: the interviewees repeated throughout the interviews that they 'adapt', and 'adjust' to the conditions, to longer hours and lower wages. Another tactic is what I call 'identity': this means defending and preserving one's own sense of identity by mobilizing what one believes are one's distinctive features. Some examples can clarify this tactic. For instance, Rasia rejected the label of 'carer' ('badante').

> *Rasia*. … and so I started working as a home attendant, let's say.
> *Gaia*. Ok, so you started working as a carer.
> *Rasia*. No, it was more like, it was a small villa with the parents living on the first floor, elderly but smart, I mean they didn't need much help.

Rasia resisted being labelled a 'carer': she could thus exercise 'a certain degree of agency and maintain an identity beyond and outside that of the "maid" carved for them by the dominant group' (Ueno, 2009, p. 510). Another resilience practice is 'proactivity',

having a propositional attitude and a sense of initiative. I coded under 'proactivity' all those actions that imply a desire to take control of the situation.

> *Victoria*. About the job instead… as I was saying, I'm thinking about… I don't know, taking a course or trying the…. Recognition of diploma, but I'm in the gathering-information phase… […] I repeat, only the fact that… I'm gathering information is a good step, I think.
> *Gaia*. Yes, just this is a lot, the first step is the hardest.
> *Victoria*. Yeah, yeah, for sure. Let's see what… this year I set out, starting next year, I set out to look around, to start and get my driving licence again [laughs]. Then maybe look for a course or the conversion of the diploma, let's see if I can and see where I can get.

Victoria said that she had decided to look into how to convert her diploma, to search for training courses, get her driving licence: she was not just feeling still and trapped, but was trying to regain control over her life, to change it in a direction she felt comfortable with. These women are not passive, they have the desire to be in charge of their lives once again. Nonetheless, their insecure orientation, neither here nor there, constrains their agency tactics: to be sure, as Victoria said, they are taking the first step, but it seems to stop there. The following step, to actually change their employment and take that course, seems to be missing. Not knowing whether to stay or go leads to caution about making a big investment here in terms of time, energy and money. Their reworking practices are similar to those of the *there* group. The most frequently adopted are 'flexibility', 'quitting' and 'preserving mental and physical health', all of which are often intertwined. For example, after working for ten years in the same house, Rasia, decided to quit in order to have a more flexible timetable and to preserve her mental health. Just because they are uncertain about their future prospects, this does not mean they are willing to put up with any type of employment; they want to protect their dignity and individuality.

Here

I split this group into two. The first includes women who have no doubts about staying in Italy, but are not satisfied with their current job in the care sector and are looking for a different one. These women are in their 40s, highly qualified and hold college degrees. They are enjoying their lives in Italy and feel empowered by the migration process. After her divorce, Sofiya had moved from being a housewife to having an autonomous wage:

> I started doing everything by myself, looking for jobs, searching how it works in Italy, because before he [ex-husband] did all of that, I didn't know anything, where to go, how to do… I started realizing how it works here in Italy, where you have to go, what to ask.

Their resilience practices are quite similar to those of the previous group, but more numerous. The interviewees repeated that they had to 'get used to' things and 'adapt'. 'Proactivity' is employed as well: Sofiya explained that she has been looking for training courses to become a beautician, while Olena asked the Centre for Employment for help in finding a new job. Another practice of resilience is 'testing': this means working for one or two 'trial' weeks before actually signing a contract with the employer. This is a practice the women have developed through time and experience, after encountering unpleasant situations.

Reworking tactics really differentiate the *here* group from the *neither here nor there* group. Although they also privilege jobs that allow greater flexibility and secure their physical and mental health, they have introduced a new practice: 'taking courses'. These women are not only proactive, but actually invest in courses. Kesi has attended a hairdressing school, and Daryna has completed a B2 Italian language course in order to access later OSS courses, while Olena is taking an online course to become a web developer. Their *here* orientation has made them confident enough to invest resources in a long-term project, while their desire to change jobs has tailored their tactics to their objective.

Women in the second group like their jobs in the care sector, and do not intend to change them. They constitute the largest group in my sample, nine women, and thus it is the most heterogeneous group. They are mostly in their late 50s, and have all been living in Italy for about 20 years. Most of them have a high-school education, apart from two who have college degrees. They have invested a lot of money in buying a house or paying the mortgage here, their families have joined them or they have built a new one, they no longer have relationships with people in their home country, they have new friends and networks, and most of them hold Italian citizenship. They feel that they belong in Italy, and believe that their lives have greatly improved since they moved to Italy and took jobs in the domestic sector: they feel empowered by their life choices.

Women in this group use the greatest variety of agency practices. I also identified one participant who uses resistance practices. As opposed to the *there* group, almost all women in this group do a lot of 'extra work', in terms of both tasks and hours. Some, like Lidia, took care of the hair and nails of the women they worked for as beauticians, others, like Ecaterina, stayed longer hours:

> Yes, many times I also worked on Tuesday afternoon, my free day, because I had something to do so I would stay, I would lose track of time, I didn't care about my free day though, I wanted everything to be… I wanted to make others happy.

Another resilience practice is connected to this one, 'give meaning to the work'. This entails the assigning of extra value to the work they are carrying out. They have an extra incentive to do their work, since the possibility of seeing the results of a job well done is what really drives them. They want to be able to reappropriate their work and receive recognition for it. External and internal recognition are what assign dignity to their work and, by extension, to themselves. Karina described her work with a mentally ill young woman she helped to recover.

> The lady is really different now. I worked with her this year as well. She used to be athletic, tall, but she walked like…all hunched, now she walks straight, she walks well, with two sticks. She and I used to walk four km in one direction round the lake, and four in the other, ten km per day […] I did exercise with her, I did many things. When I used to say 'Paola, let's do this, something' she was like 'I don't care' and she would go away, she didn't care about anything. But now…. Little by little she improved, we did many things. For me… I see the results of my work and this gives me great satisfaction.

Karina goes way beyond her job requirements, because she wants recognition for her achievements. The practice of 'giving meaning to the work' is closely connected not only to 'extra work', but also to 'creating significant relationships'. These three practices mutually speak to each other and form the main nexus of the *here* group. 'Creating significant relationships' means investing personal feelings and resources in improving their employer's wellbeing – the outsourcing of love that Hochschild (2002; 2012) talked about. This in turn encourages workers to do extra work and to seek meaning for it. They all said they were fond of the households they worked for and they all 'keep them in their heart' as Nina said in her interview. They have remained in contact with previous employers and have managed to create strong bonds with them. As a challenging job, at both the physical and psychological level, finding ways to give meaning to the job and to create meaningful relationships is what enables workers to get by day to day, and to assign cultural dignity to their job and their situation.

Reworking tactics that privilege physical and mental health, or flexibility and autonomy, are widely used: conducting a healthy and full life is their priority. 'Quitting' is used when the job is not good for them or when they feel exploited. In contrast to the other groups though, when they believe they are being treated unfairly they not only quit, but they turn to other institutions or authorities. Lidia, for example, contacted the union to obtain the money she was owed by the company she used to work for, and Karina contacted both union and lawyers when her former employers

did not pay taxes on her salary. 'Contacting institutions' is a reworking tactic that is employed only after workers have gathered enough knowledge about the country, its institutions and their rights. They are the only group using this practice because they believe it is worth investing even in long legal disputes to see their rights acknowledged.

Workers in this group set clear parameters for care receivers they are willing to accept. The seriousness of the illness is an important consideration, because they want to preserve their own health: they thus reject anyone who is too ill to be taken care of. At the same time, they do not accept people they deem self-sufficient and who cannot use their help. Their work must give meaning to their lives, they should be able to get satisfaction and personal reward from it. Their job is a source of dignity, and they would no feel dignified if they considered their job to be pointless.

I end this chapter with an example of resistance. Nina is a 59-year-old Moldovan woman who moved to Italy 18 years ago. The trauma of the migration she experienced led her to devote her life to helping other migrants and raising awareness about the poor working conditions in the care and domestic sector. Her objective is not just to improve her own working conditions, because she is aware of the exploitation to which workers like her are subjected and she wants to dismantle it.

> Gaia, I have a great pain in my soul now, but I want to spread this voice. I thought I'd ask, maybe you can help me, I want to speak on television to ask this government to look at all of us, who are working, who are taking care of your dear ones in this country, and we thank this country that gave us food, but we came here and we spent all of our youth, we came healthy and we left sick or dead in coffins, and no one considers this. This thing is…unbelievable. And I'd like to say, from what I understand, our children too, the generations of our children, grandchildren, they feel bad psychologically […], we don't know what might happen in the future. For this reason these people, politicians, need to think about the future of this country, think about the young people who are already integrated, they're not going back.

Throughout the interview, she asked me many times to help her spread her story and raise awareness about domestic workers' conditions. She has written two articles for a local paper about her unfair firing, she has spoken on television, and is planning to write a book about her life, and she has suggestions for policy proposals to improve working conditions and protect workers. I believe that Nina's story is an example of resistance: she is striving to subvert the appalling conditions that migrants experience in the domestic sector and she is fighting to occupy public spaces to spread the word about the reality of domestic workers' pain and suffering.

Conclusions

The key findings on women's agency in entering the care sector show that migrants identify policies as a constraining element, but this does not exhaust the matter. Economic issues play a key role, as well as personal networks, education, gender norms and orientation towards the future. The role of structure is crucial, and the Italian state promulgates policies to direct migrant women into specific sectors. But it is equally important not to limit the analysis to structural factors, but to consider the agency enacted by migrants. On this matter, I have described three groups. These migrant women demonstrated different types of agency depending on whether they were oriented towards *there*, *here* or *neither here nor there*.

The first group invested little energy, time or commitment to being here, thus their agency tactics were limited in number and scope, and mainly concerned the precise enforcement of their contracts and the preservation of their overall health and requirements for flexibility and autonomy. The group *neither here nor there* suffered from the indecisiveness of its participants: it was formed of women who did not like their jobs in the care sector. At the same time, they only took limited concrete action to change their situation, due to their uncertain future perspectives. They did not know whether it made sense to invest resources if their permanence here was not guaranteed. The *here* group was internally split into two: firstly, those who wanted to change their work, and were taking concrete action to do so, employing a set of tactics to increase their chances; secondly, women who liked their employment in the care sector. These women displayed the widest range of tactics. They have developed great knowledge about the sector through time and experience, and now they know exactly what their rights and responsibilities are, and how to ensure that these are respected. Similarly, they know exactly which jobs they are willing to accept and what they consider to be decent employment. Their agency practices demonstrated great creativity and innovation, signalling great activity and sense of initiative.

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The difficult path of Italian Socialist women towards the conquest of a political space

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Abstract

In 1912, a group of women founded a periodical connected to the Italian Socialist Party that was written by women for women. The foundation of an all-female newspaper, in a context as difficult as that of Italy between the 19th and 20th centuries, demonstrates how strong and urgent women's determination was to communicate with other women, to spread the idea of a more just and equal world and, ultimately, to be politically relevant. This paper aims to contextualize the position of women and their exclusion from the political sphere in the Italian Kingdom, founded in 1861, and to investigate how women, in particular socialists, started to occupy spaces in the public sphere that were not designed for them and to make use of political tools and discourses in order to address their gender and to create new political practices. Combining different sources from secondary literature, this contribution will attempt to understand how women resisted the opposition to their activism and political participation, and entered all-male political spaces.

Keywords: Gender history; Women's history; Italian political women; Socialist Party; Trade Unions; Newspapers

Introduction

In a social and political environment as difficult as it was in Italy between the end of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century, there were women, especially in leftist circles, who for the first time were making politics their profession. These were

women who had started to occupy spaces in the public sphere that were not designed for them and to seize the tools and discourses of politics, sometimes inventing their own, who wanted to address their gender and create new political practices. They were educated, prepared, passionate women who rejected the stereotypical and predetermined roles imposed by society, moving within and outside political organizations and parties to inform, educate and organize subjects in a way not foreseen by socialist or Marxist doctrines.

These women started to speak out about their political positions and ideas in the public sphere, and their intense engagement was an indication of a radical change in how women were beginning to perceive themselves. Female politicians, through their presence and tireless efforts to disseminate ideas, with their public speeches and newspapers, were contributing to redefining the position of women within society and asserting the political strength of their gender, recognizing themselves as a collective subject. The Italian political philosopher Paola Rudan, in her research on the historical movement of the concept of 'woman', asserts that 'woman is a political concept that becomes such when women claim to define themselves against any manifestation of the dominating oppression' (2020, p. 9) and adds:

> to make woman a political concept – placing it in history and opening up the experience it condenses to transformation – are precisely the women who, with their presence, collective actions, and speaking out, prevent the term from being permanently occupied by its masculine definition. (2020, p. 15)[1]

The theoretical and conceptual framework within which Rudan's recent work moves, along with that of others, is the result of a stratification of studies that, since the 1980s, have aimed to give a truly political value to the voices, thoughts and experiences of women, who were long relegated to the margins of historical narrative.[2] By moving along the margins of history, feminist historiography in Italy, as well as abroad, has invented new categories of interpretation to reread the past. Consider, for example, the

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[1] All translations from Italian and French texts were made by the author of this paper.

[2] In this regard, the French historian Michelle Perrot has affirmed: 'To write the history of women is to emerge from the silence in which they were submerged. But why this silence? And first of all: do women even have a history? The question may seem strange. "Everything is history," said George Sand, as later echoed by Marguerite Yourcenar: "Everything is the story." Why shouldn't women belong to history? It all depends on the meaning we give to the word "history." History is what happens, the sequence of events, changes, revolutions, evolutions, and accumulations that weave the becoming of societies. But it is also the narrative that we construct. The English distinguish between "story" and "history." Women have long been outside of this narrative, as if destined to the obscurity of an ineffable reproduction, they were outside of time, at least outside of events. Buried in the silence of an abyssal sea.' (Perrot, 2006, p. 9)

gender category theorized by Joan Scott (1986), or the concept of intersectionality introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989). Hence, it has successfully recovered, revalued and attributed new centrality to experiences that did not conform to traditional or universal canons of official historiography. The feminist standpoint in the study of history has not been limited solely to the recovery of the history of feminisms and feminists; on the contrary, it has been consolidated on the basis of new lenses and new perspectives that are useful for a more complex reinterpretation of global history and national and local stories. This means that feminist historiography has, on the one hand, contributed to recognizing phenomena that, with due differentiations, cut across different cultures, societies and subjects, such as the patriarchal system; on the other hand, it has proposed objects of study and sources that have traditionally been considered of little or no importance. Family, women's work, the consequences of war, female and male slavery, and experiences of internment within psychiatric institutions are just a few examples of non-conventional themes introduced by feminist historiography.

This critical movement, which was founded on the deconstruction of historically given social relations and on the recovery of stories and experiences, has continued to be fuelled over the last forty years by increasingly interdisciplinary and complex research and studies, and Italy is no exception. Therefore, this paper seeks to join this critical movement reviewing disciplinary canons and the universalization of male experiences, by looking at Italian political history, political parties and workers' and leftist organizations through the experiences of a number of socialist women who made politics their *raison d'être*, who refused to be reduced to the maternal and reproductive role imposed by patriarchal society. These women were operating during an extremely complicated period of Italian history: the early decades of the 20th century witnessed a succession of turmoil: workers' and peasants' protests; wars such as the imperialist Italo-Turkish War (1911–1912), and Italy's intervention in the First World War (1915–1918); social, political, and economic crises; and the birth and proliferation of nationalisms in Europe.

Contextualizing women's collective and individual experiences requires a social and political examination of the conditions of women's exclusion from politics at various levels of the public sphere, from the state and political parties to workers' and Italian leftist associations, and that is where this paper starts.

This exercise of synthesizing the terms of exclusion, stereotyping and oppression of women has been drawn from recently published secondary literature. In order to understand the historical framework of the processes that excluded women from the state and public sphere, the contributions of Catia Papa, Vinzia Fiorino and Paola Stelliferi in the volume edited by Silvia Salvatici, *Storia delle donne nell'Italia*

contemporanea (History of Women in Contemporary Italy), released in 2022, have been essential sources. Here, the conditions faced by Italian women during the first half of the 20th century have been analysed, moving beyond the exclusive and rigid categories of inclusion/exclusion and private/public. The recent contribution of Fiorenza Tarricone (2020) has helped to redefine the impact of women's political participation in socialist associations. The studies conducted by Alessandra Pescarolo (2019) and Fiorella Imprenti (2007) on women's work have gathered data, statistics and interpretations that demonstrate a massive presence of women in the world of work, in the factories and fields, as well as in workers' and trade union political spaces.

The use of secondary sources lays the groundwork for outlining the context in which female politicians operated, particularly socialist and, later, communist women. This paper primarily aims to understand how and with what tools some women decided to approach politics, facing as they were institutionalized exclusion at all levels of the public and political sphere, by overcoming gender barriers and resisting male power. In fact, the paper acts as an introduction and a premise for the contextual framework for a broader research project[3] that seeks to retrace in archives and primary literature the networks of people and ideas that animated socialist and communist women's groups, by exploring the stimuli suggested by the feminist critique of archives.[4] The objective of the contribution is, therefore, to raise important questions to serve as a starting point for the initial stages of the research. These will interrogate the relationship between the practical and intellectual choice of the first socialist women to dedicate themselves to activism and the male-dominated spaces of Italian politics. This reconstruction will be followed by a more detailed analysis of the specific experiences of some protagonists of the 20th century and the forms of resistance they employed to carve out space in political environments to organize, speak and educate other women.

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[3] This paper is part of a three-year project entititled: 'We do not have our own history: Thought and forms of struggle of Socialist and Communist women, 1911–1925' conducted within the framework of the PhD in Social Sciences – curriculum: Political Science promoted by the University of Genoa.

[4] The critical movement towards archives was born in the United States between the 1990s and 2000s, leading to a shift that became known as the 'archival turn' in the way in which archives are conceived: from a resource to an object of study. This turn not only influenced multiple fields of knowledge, from history to anthropology, ethnography and the social sciences broadly understood, but it also took on increasingly specific characteristics. Critiques of archives originated from feminist scholars, as well as scholars of postcolonial studies and subaltern studies (Stoler, 2010). In particular, feminist criticisms highlighted the pre-existing exclusion of women from the shelves of an archive, based on the perceived irrelevance, in the eyes of scholars and archivists, of women's experiences and ideas (Katz, 1991; Eichhorn, 2013; Chaudhuri et al., 2010; Cifor and Wood, 2017; Caswell, 2021).

Italian political context and women's exclusion

Post-unitary Italy – i.e. the period that began with the proclamation of Unity in 1861 – was a context marked by great ferment and new cultural, social and political experiments. In a territory that was becoming a nation for the first time, in the form of a constitutional monarchy, there was a need to legitimize state dominance and, above all, to create a cohesive people who identified with the new political-institutional framework. During this phase of nation-building, a 'process of imagining the sovereign nation was taking place, in its dual form of *people-nation*, a unified subject with sovereignty, and *people-sovereign*, representing the part of the nation legitimately empowered to exercise power' (Papa, 2022, p. 27). The adoption of gender as a lens to interpret these processes of imagination, construction and identification clarifies how the concepts of nation, state and people assumed specific meanings based on principles of difference and exclusion. They were codified under the sign of *alterity*, according to a rigid hierarchy of class, race and gender. Gender, which refers to the rules that assign different social roles based on sexual difference (Scott, 1999, p. 202), therefore played a significant role in defining power relationships and establishing a hierarchy of privileges and rights.

In the search for an Italian national identity, appeals to women's national sentiment were frequent: through the mobilization of feminine images and symbols, women were asked to fulfil their role as mothers and hearth angels, and to be responsible for the reproduction of the true sovereign people, which was male.

> Inhabiting the domestic national space, where it was believed the moral personality of nations would grow, women played a role that was anything but secondary in the rhetoric about the characteristics of peoples [...]. The paradox of nationalism in the European space of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries lies precisely in this: it was a gender language of the community that was widely shared but at the same time 'divisive' due to a process of identification through opposition, nourishing aspirations for national affirmation in a Europe internalized as the centre of the world. (Papa, 2022, p. 29)

In the period immediately preceding the foundation of the Kingdom of Italy, nationalist enthusiasm had infected many women throughout the peninsula, and the new political-national framework was also the result of massive female mobilization. They had passionately participated in social and economic demands, supported the national project and shared the new sense of belonging to the homeland (Fiorino, 2022, p. 56). Yet, the enthusiasm and participation of these women did not translate into the granting of citizenship rights. With the new nation state, a clear separation between the

private and public spheres was established, excluding the female population from the political arena and confining women's actions to caregiving, to certain limited types of work with no possibility of a career, and to the domestic sphere.

The exclusion of women from political participation and any form of exercise of power was based on the idea that women – as a stereotyped category based on a particular idea of sexual morality that encompassed all women without distinction – should only act and move within the private spaces of the home and family, and be responsible for the reproduction, care and education of children. The role of women was limited to the reproductive function that ensured the continuation of a national biological community, thus marking the definitive exclusion of women from the public and political sphere. This exclusion, foreseen by the state, was realized in the new Kingdom of Italy in the form of constitutional and civil laws: from the denial of women's right to vote provided by the Albertine Statute, albeit not explicitly,[5] to the laws of the Italian Civil Code (*Pisanelli Code*) of 1865 that regulated marital authorization. The latter, in addition to reaffirming the natural inferiority of women, stated that, in the relationship between wife and husband, the wife was subject to the authority of her husband, who had the power to authorize or deny any wife's public act. Women were only allowed to testify in courts starting from 1877, they were prevented from pursuing liberal professions, although they could access any degree from 1874, they were forbidden from seeing their children if they separated from their husbands, even with just cause, and they lacked economic autonomy because they could not personally rent property, take out loans or freely dispose of their property. In addition to these prohibitions, the exclusive exercise of *patria potestas* over children was reserved for the breadwinner alone. This means that, in Italy, as in the rest of Europe, it was the modern state and politics that produced and perpetuated the difference between men and women, legislating on women's bodies and denying them social and political rights. As the American historian Joan W. Scott states:

> the political choice that associated citizenship with being male [...] introduced sexual difference where it did not exist and where it should not have existed. Women only became visible in the political sphere when they were excluded from it because of their sex. Sexual difference was thus the effect, not the cause, of women's exclusion. (Scott 1999, p. 212).

However, the state was not the only institution to foresee female exclusion: the same prejudices that depicted women as inferior beings, guided by an irrational and

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[5] Although the constitution of the Kingdom of Italy, the Albertine Statute, did not limit the vote to men only, women by convention did not vote. In addition, the right to vote was in practice limited to men who were over 25 years old, literate and able to pay a certain annual census.

emotional nature and therefore unfit for managing public and political affairs, circulated within those revolutionary movements of a worker, socialist and Marxist nature that spread throughout Italy between the 19th and 20th centuries.

The necessity of organization among women

The prejudices, stereotypes, forms of oppression and condition of subordination that women experienced did not prevent them from entering public spaces in a variety of ways. On the contrary:

> the presence of women thickens, progressively emerges from anonymity, experiences new freedoms of movement, along an unexpected path in which women, relying on educational options and new behavioural models, develop an increasing awareness of their rights and their social and political role within and outside the domestic walls. (De Donno, 2022, p. 118)

The first experiences of politicization among Italian women date back to the end of the 19th century. These assumed different forms and characteristics, composing a heterogeneous and widespread panorama of women's presence in the public sphere. Towards the end of the 19th century, the first feminist associations were born, providing women with the opportunity to engage in dialogue, experience moments of collectivity and exercise those rights denied to them in public spaces (Taricone, 2020, pp. 10–11). Since women's and feminist associations extended throughout Italy, creating a dense and composite network of experiences, it is more accurate to speak of a plurality of feminisms rather than a single Italian feminist movement. Two key tendencies can be recognized, however: 'for some, the egalitarian strategy would prove successful, emphasizing a substantial equivalence between genders' (Fiorino, 2022, p. 60). This approach can be attributed to the ideas of the woman commonly recognized as the founder of the women's movement in Italy, Anna Maria Mozzoni, whose life and thought have been reconstructed in detail by the historian Franca Pieroni Bortolotti (1975). Bortolotti highlighted that Mozzoni fought all her life for women's suffrage and economic independence as a resource for emancipation.[6] 'Others considered the achievement of political rights as a means to enhance sexual difference as an element pregnant with a set of peculiar qualities: pacifism, altruism, dedication,

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[6] For further background on the pioneering figure of Italian feminist Anna Maria Mozzoni, see Pieroni Bortolotti Franca (1975), *Alle origini del movimento femmile in Italia: 1848–1892*, Turin: Einaudi and Buttafuoco Annarita (1998), *Le mariuccine. Storia di una istituzione femminile laica: L'Asilo Mariuccia*, Milan: FrancoAngeli.

sensitivity, spirit of sacrifice' (Fiorino, 2022, p. 60). This second inclination characterized the Unione femminile, an association established in Milan in 1899 with the aim of organizing the struggle for gender equality and women's rights.

Simultaneously, women's presence spread within the workers' associations, a political phenomenon that was initially dominated by men and characterized by strong resistance to female involvement. In Italy, workers' associations consist of a series of trade unions and category organizations that initially emerged as mutual aid societies in the mid-19th century under the influence of the associationist and mutualistic ideas of Italian politician Giuseppe Mazzini. Towards the end of that century, they became institutionalized through the creation of the Chambers of Labour. These workers' organizations aimed to create spaces of solidarity among workers in factories and in the countryside to compensate for the shortcomings of the social welfare system and to provide tools of resistance and defence against exploitation and unemployment.

The need for workers to organize and unite to support specific struggles and oppose the forms of exploitation and oppression perpetrated by employers can be attributed to the process of industrialization that was affecting northern Italy, particularly cities like Milan and Turin. This phenomenon led to an increase in waged labour in factories, involving both men and women. According to data collected by Fiorella Imprenti, women already represented more than 50% of the industrial workforce (2007, pp. 17–22), even before they entered factories *en masse* during Italy's involvement in the First World War. While the massive influx of women onto the industrial labour market is often attributed to the outbreak of war in 1915, when men were sent to the front and women were called upon to support the war effort and to take on traditionally male work and bureaucratic roles, Imprenti demonstrates that factories already had a significant female presence. These women, particularly those from the poorest social classes, not only carried the burden of dual labour, factory work and domestic work – as recognized by Ersilia Bronzini Majno, a Piedmontese emancipation activist, in her 1900 intervention at the National Provident Congress (Imprenti, 2007, p. 23) – but also endured unsustainable work rhythms and received much lower wages than their male counterparts.

Although the organization of the female labour force was already a recurring issue among socialists and labour organizations, the prevailing opinion among men was that women were still in an infantile phase of their political journey[7], and therefore incapable of creating an organic and solid organization. The male conviction that

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[7] Working women were generally associated with minors: it is indicative that the first law in favour of women's work proposed by socialist politician Anna Kuliscioff in 1902, spoke almost without distinction about women and minors.

working women were politically unaware and inadequately prepared to face the dynamics of organized struggles resulted in an almost complete lack of interest among men about informing women or propagating socialist ideas among women within the working class and peasant masses. Against this widespread male indifference, combined with the fear that women's political awakening would create fractures and divisions within the party, entire groups of women promoted strong demands for justice and liberation and, consequently, a new female awareness began to grow of the injustices they suffered solely on the basis of their biological sex. Between the 1890s and the first decade of the 20th century, and thus before the outbreak of the First World War, particularly in industrialized northern regions and rural areas, there was an unprecedented growth among the female working masses and widespread activism. Women working in various sectors of the economy and industry engaged in strikes and protests to demand the reduction of working hours, higher wages and better working conditions. On the one hand, the arguments that women put forward during these protests demonstrate that they were already aware of the asymmetries that differentiated them from men; on the other hand, these waves of mobilization reveal that women were highly receptive to the ideas and principles developed by socialist, and later Marxist, revolutionary currents.

> These currents re-elaborated and employed concepts such as equality vs. inequality, liberation vs. oppression, freedom vs. slavery, self-determination vs. assimilation, etc. The monopoly of symbolic tradition by men forced women to use languages and concepts developed by men. Given women's subaltern position, albeit with numerous variations, the most functional to their cause were naturally those that represented the reasons of men excluded from power. (Arruzza and Cirillo, 2017 p. 34).

Referring to socialist and Marxist ideas of leadership, direction and organization – in Italy these principles have been thoroughly investigated by the philosopher Antonio Gramsci[8] – it became clear that these fighting female masses lacked guidance, i.e. leaders who could provide them with organization and direction in their struggles. This absence was generally justified by the belief that women's mobilizations were merely spontaneous and irrational movements, as long as women were scientifically and commonly understood as fragile, irrational and moody subjects.

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[8] See Gramsci A. (1992–2011) *Prison Notebooks*, Vols. 1, 2, and 3, ed. and trans. J.A. Buttigieg (with A. Callari in Vol. 2), New York: Columbia University Press.

The socialist female group and open questions

Abigaille Zanetta

Maria Giudice

Angelica Balabanoff

Anna Kuliscioff

Maria Goja

Linda Malnati

Argentina Altobelli

Starting in 1908, this void left by union leaders and high-ranking members of the Socialist Party was filled by socialist women in Milan, who took on the role of guiding the female working masses, engaging in extensive propaganda, education and coordination of women workers.

> The socialist women's group, a political formation outside of the labour chamber, assumed the role that should have been held by the women's federation, serving as a coordinating function, managing propaganda, intervening in strikes, and providing popular education through the establishment of specific courses for women workers. This trend strengthened in the following years and led to the founding of the periodical 'La Difesa delle Lavoratrici' (The defence of working women) in 1912. (Imprenti, 2007, p. 44)

Newspapers, along with the speeches given by socialist politicians themselves, throughout Italy and sometimes even elsewhere in Europe, represented the first means by which female politicians communicated with and informed women workers. It is also interesting to note how the newspaper pages served not only a political but also a social and educational function: through the newspapers, women often learned to read and write, fighting against the illiteracy that characterized the majority of the female population (Soldani and Fanchini, 2004).

While 'La Difesa delle Lavoratrici' was not the first socialist newspaper written by women for women, it remains one of the most significant experiences: it was the most widely circulated socialist women's periodical on the peninsula and the longest-running – it was published almost continuously for 13 years, from 1912 to 1925. The goal of these socialist women was to develop new strategies of struggle for women that combined women's issues and class struggle, establishing what is now called intersectional struggle between gender and class (Cirillo in Bebel, 2021). This approach becomes clear when reading the first page of issue number 1 of 'La Difesa delle Lavoratrici', published in January 1912: here, the propagandists define women as 'a new force' and aim to 'make the true voice of the oppressed and exploited – the perpetually forgotten – the women of labour – heard' (La Difesa delle Lavoratrici, 1912, p. 1). The article then clarifies the specific objectives of the newspaper: to inform the female working population about events taking place in Italy; to establish direct contact with industrial, agricultural and household workers; to convince all Italian women workers of their value as workers, mothers and educators; to demonstrate the possibility of a fairer and more just society as predicted by socialist thought; and to encourage the female masses to actively participate in protests against the capitalist system and to fight for their fundamental rights, such as equal pay and the right to vote.

With the critical recognition of this arduous work of information, propaganda and dissemination of ideas carried out by socialist women, several questions arise: Who are these women? How did they become acquainted with and engage with socialist and Marxist ideas? How did they gain visibility and authority in a political space that was almost exclusively male-dominated? How did they overcome the scepticism of women who were distant from politics? What ideas and strategies of struggle did they transmit to their fellow women?

The socialist women's group, which also corresponded to the editorial group of 'La Difesa delle Lavoratrici', consisted of women from different social backgrounds. This means that their paths towards the development of strong political consciousness and their decision to engage in milita3nt and propagandist activities shared both commonalities and differences, depending on their territorial origin and family background. A substantial proportion of these socialist women were teachers: Abigaille Zanetta, a teacher by profession, was well-known in Milan during the first decade of the 20th century for her great welfare and charity work, although her first political appearances were in the Catholic press, from 1910 she worked in the socialist movement before moving to the newly formed Communist Party in 1924; Maria Goja, teacher of Italian History and literature, was recognized for her teaching skills and her profound knowledge of child development; Maria Giudice, an elementary teacher, was the first woman to direct a trade union and a party journal, 'Il Grido del Popolo'; Linda

Malnati and Carlotta Clerici were a lesbian couple who founded the *League of Protection of Women's Interests* and focused great attention on female education and teaching women. All of these women took advantage of the progressive expansion of female education, which had been in place since the second half of the 19th century.

The subsequent mass entry of women into the teaching profession significantly increased the cultural level of Italian women and their capacity for critical analysis of the surrounding reality. In fact, 'education became an essential tool for breaking the traditional domestic role of women and opening up young women to paid non-manual work' (Trisciuzzi, 2022, p. 86). Teaching represented an opportunity for women to engage in non-manual work and achieve a certain economic and intellectual autonomy (Trisciuzzi, 2022, p. 85): it is therefore not surprising that many of the socialist propagandists, lecturers and journalists came from an educational background. Teaching provided them with the necessary tools for a conscious, clear and direct use of the written and spoken word. On the other hand, there were individuals, like Anna Kuliscioff, Argentina Altobelli and Angelica Balabanoff, whose university education – with diverse academic paths, the first in medicine, the second in law, and the third with a strong humanistic background from attending various European universities – ensured a high degree of political awareness and knowledge of socialist and Marxist ideals.

All these proponents of the socialist movement share extraordinary experiences: they were among the first women to found and lead newspapers, associations and party sections. Their commitment, although still in need of further clarification and exploration, can be summarized as 'triple militancy': in the Socialist Party, in labour and trade union organizations, in the women's movement within the party, and sometimes, as in the case of Carlotta Clerici, in emancipationist associations (Serci, 2008, pp. 119–120). As Fiorenza Taricone states, the merit of having these active female militants in various spaces of the Italian socialist left was to 'establish a theoretical model for the development of a women's issue not foreseen by the Marxist doctrine of class struggle and the oppressor-exploited dialectic, to which they also referred' (Taricone, 2020, p. 71).

It is therefore clear that, to date, only some of the questions arising from the often-forgotten experiences of women can be answered. We know their names and biographical profiles, although these are sometimes incomplete, and the work of socialist women politicians. However, a precise analysis that engages with their life experiences, both as individuals and as a group, and recognizes their ideas, their theoretical elaborations and the practical outcomes of their propaganda work, is still lacking. For this reason, a process of recovery and reassessment of published and unpublished sources produced by these women is necessary in order to study the

contributions of female politicians, paying particular attention to both individual experiences and collective dimensions. This work involves studying the sources while keeping in mind the networks of ideas and people that female socialist politicians, and later communist women, created during the early decades of the 20th century, which opened up new possibilities for women in the field of politics.

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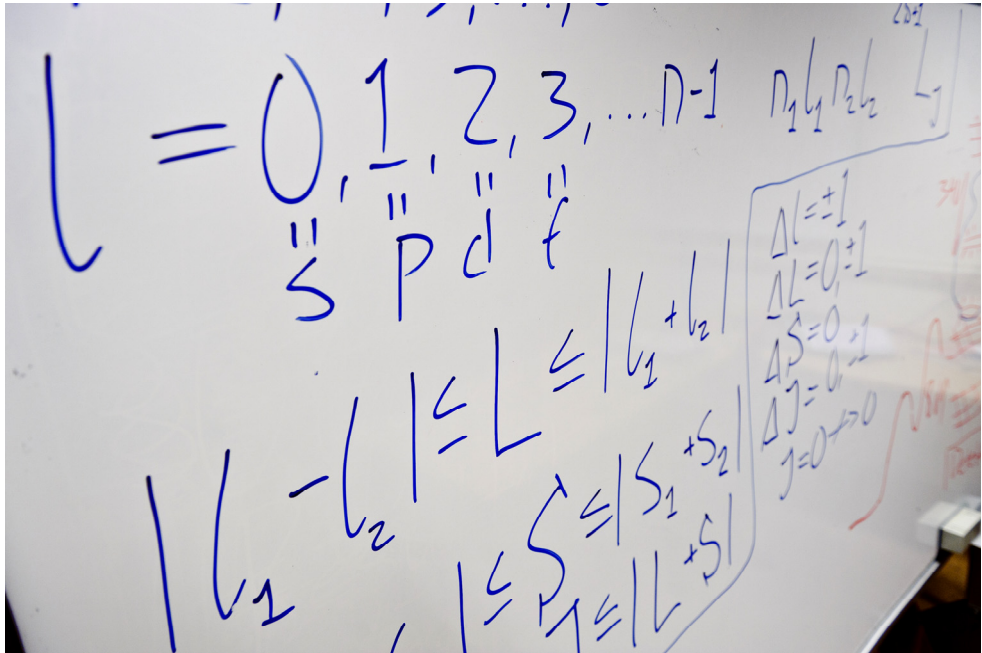
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Classrooms of the present and practices of the past: The importance of understanding physics teachers' embodied practices as a possible locus for social change

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Abstract

Physics classrooms are still clearly marked by practices belonging to a certain educational past, while teachers are increasingly being asked to teach in alignment with current equality, diversity and inclusion agendas. At the core of this temporal disconnect are teachers' practices, which are strongly marked by normative regimes in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, class and other social factors. Moreover, certain practices more than others are constantly being transmitted, validated and legitimized as the normative ways of teaching. Drawing upon post-structuralist and feminist perspectives on teaching, practices, knowledge and subjectivities, in this theoretical paper I discuss the implications of understanding teachers' practices as embodied practices. Doing so brings to the fore the normative dynamics of physics teachers' taken-for-granted and invisible practices. Building on Vick and Martinez's argument about the centrality of the body in teachers' practices, I argue for the importance of understanding physics teachers' embodied practices, because it bridges the gap between the equality that teachers strive to achieve in and through education, and what they end up doing in practice.

Keywords: embodied practices, physics teachers, physics culture, inclusion, equality.

Introduction

As a non-physicist conducting ethnographic research on physics education, I have had many interesting encounters with the culture of physics – a term first coined in Traweek's (1992) pioneering work. I have learned from physics bachelor's students that dedicating time to playing basketball is not an appropriate activity for physicists or physics students. I have also gathered from physics researchers at an internationally renowned research facility that, on the rare occasions when physicists have free time, there is a set of hobbies – such as mountain biking, hiking, skiing and gaming – that are socially valued within the physics community and other hobbies – like dancing, painting or knitting – that are not.

When discussing such observations[1] with physicists and non-physicists alike, and I mention that some individuals feel like leaving physics for reasons such as their passion for basketball, people's most common reaction is to laugh at this example. To me, however, it is no laughing matter. Although the connection between playing basketball and the ability to do physics might seem naïve and irrational, trivial aspects such as sharing the same hobbies as your peers have a considerable impact on people's feelings of belonging to a certain group. These examples about hobbies and the discipline of physics demonstrate that being seen and feeling like someone who belongs in the discipline requires one to perform a certain type of identity that is compatible with the physics culture. This can be explained by the fact that how physics – and also science more broadly – is taught, practised and represented is shaped by sociocultural processes (Hasse, 2015), which in turn results in specific cultures with their own codes, norms, values and practices (Hasse, 2002, 2008); including what types of hobbies are accepted and encouraged within the physics culture (Hasse, 2015).

What is interesting about these comments from physicists and physics students about accepted hobbies within their field is that they demonstrate that people do not only learn about equations when obtaining their physics degree. They also learn about the culture surrounding physics, which many researchers have described as a science for only a few – normally the "genius" types (Gosling, 2020; Hasse and Trentemøller, 2008; Ehnsmyr and Blomqvist, 2010). Discriminatory practices in physics have been demonstrated in terms of gender (Carlone, 2004; Danielsson, 2012, 2014; Gonsalves et al., 2016; Hasse, 2002, 2008), race and ethnicity (Ong, 2005; Hyater-Adams et al., 2018), class (Archer et al., 2020), disability and sexuality (Traxler and Blue, 2020), to name a few examples. In other words, when learning and teaching physics, individuals

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[1] These observations were not part of a scientific study. Instead, they relate to my professional experience in physics settings as a researcher and doctoral student interested in the physics culture.

are concomitantly creating ideas and norms about who belongs in the subject area and who does not – as expressed in their hobbies, for example.

These discriminatory practices in the field of physics are connected to a surge of demands in recent decades for diversity initiatives by academics, students and activists within higher-education institutions, which are considered at fault for overlooking discrimination despite their efforts to provide more equal opportunities (Ahmed, 2009, 2012; Pimblott, 2020; Andreotti et al., 2015). At the same time, the spotlight that is currently trained on diversity, equality and inclusion agendas in both research and education might give the impression that individuals and institutions now have more knowledge about how to teach, *practically* speaking, in favour of difference. However, as hinted by the above physics students' feelings of alienation from undergrad physics due to the perceived incompatibility of basketball and physics, perhaps physics teachers are not teaching very differently. If one subscribes to visions of education as a locus for more equal and inclusive values in society, as many powerful voices have advocated in educational scholarship (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994; Jones, 1999; Kumashiro, 2002), then the current research in physics education shows that educational settings in the Global North are still far from upholding such visions (Gonsalves and Danielsson, 2020; Carlone, 2004; Ong, 2005; Hasse, 2008).

A crucial temporal disconnect emerges: on the one hand, the current demands and visions for a future of more equity in education; on the other hand, the old and familiar practices of educational settings – including but not limited to the discipline of physics. Thus, in this theoretical paper, my aim is to explore the role of teachers' practices in this temporal disconnect in order to provide an understanding of teachers' practices that can narrow the gap between visions for a more equal and inclusive physics education and the reality of educational settings. To do so, I examine post-structuralist and feminist conceptualizations of practices in relation to knowledge and subjectivity, establishing a connection to normative regimes at the core of science and education, and especially in relation to the discipline of physics. This framework brings to the fore the murky and invisible entanglements of physics teachers' bodies in implicitly and unreflectively teaching exclusionary aspects of the physics culture, such as that physicists do not play basketball.

Practising from the past

The gap between educational research and what is practised in educational settings has been approached from different perspectives in the educational literature (Vick and Martinez, 2011; Trowler and Cooper, 2002; Reid, 2011). Nonetheless, a common

point within these perspectives is that, even though ideas about teaching have evolved, teachers themselves are a product of their past experiences in education and the conceptions emanating from them. The practices that are ingrained in the minds of teachers are always connected to particular experiences, to a certain educational past to which they belong. It is of the utmost importance for teachers' development for them to reflect upon the beliefs and values that stem from these experiences, because they shape the ways in which they conceptualize and practise teaching (Trowler and Cooper, 2002; Lortie, 2002). It is precisely because teachers' past experiences as students inform their practices as teachers that it is treacherous that, usually, the socio-cultural specificities of these experiences are left unchallenged (Finders and Rose, 1999). Thus, the disconnection between current research and visions about education, on the one hand, and the reality of education, on the other, reveals a gap in practices: teachers are familiar with the practices of the past but not with new, alternative and radical practices, regardless of their support for and dedication to equality, diversity and inclusion agendas.

This chasm between teachers' intentions and the reality of their teaching is revealed in Reid's (2011) concerns about the training of future teachers: "I think about our students entering the field of twenty-first-century teaching, armed as they are with the habitus of twentieth-century schools, and always, already, 'out of joint'" (p. 305). The expression "out of joint" encapsulates the temporal tension that new teachers encounter between their present practices and their own past experiences of education, including during their teacher training. Some examples of this tension are that the classroom context of today requires teachers to rethink the ways in which they use pronouns, how they design their lectures for normative bodies, the type of examples they give and the manner in which they position themselves, their references and the discipline's content within different societal and political struggles. These demands may come from institutions, society, students, other teachers or the teachers themselves – albeit to varying degrees.

Teachers, regardless of the stage they have reached in their career, are being asked to practise teaching in a way that is incompatible with most of the practices they were accustomed to during their educational trajectory – both before and during their teacher training. These incongruities between "espoused theory and theory in use" create several issues that teachers need to navigate, at both the individual and institutional levels (Trowler and Cooper, 2002, p. 235). Consequently, teachers are left in a very difficult and paradoxical position when it comes to teaching in alignment with inclusive and equal values. This is no less true of physics teachers, as many of them were educated at a time when many of the discriminatory practices of the physics culture were not only accepted but hardly ever challenged. An example can be found in

Traweek's (1992) ethnography of the SLAC laboratory during the 1980s, where she observed gendered differences in the way the staff members dressed. Female physicists would dress similarly to the male physicists and avoid wearing dresses or skirts, garments only worn by women engaged in administrative and secretarial work. In fact, Traweek reported seeing only one female physicist wearing a skirt during her several years at SLAC. In connection with this example, senior physicists have shared with me their past experiences of having to dress in a particular way at work so as not to be confused with secretarial staff. To this day, the number of women conducting research and teaching physics is very small, which reflects how physics teachers' past and current educational experiences are entangled with oppressive gender regimes – to cite one example among other social inequalities within physics.

The question that remains, then, is: what can we do about this temporal disconnect between teachers' intentions and practices? In fact, during the last few decades, various scholars have been advocating for a reconceptualization of the role of practice in education, especially in teacher training (Grossman et al., 2009; Reid, 2011; Lampert, 2010; Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999). Some of these scholars argue, albeit in very different ways, that teacher training is at fault for not teaching practices and for not teaching *in* practice. However, bridging this gap does not depend solely on giving a more central role to practices in teacher training. One overlooked aspect of this discussion is that practices are already at the core of teaching, albeit often in an invisible and unreflective way (Vick and Martinez, 2011; Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999; Finders and Rose, 1999). One cannot teach outside of practice: teaching is always done in practice.

To be able to teach more inclusively and equally is not only a matter of learning how to practise teaching anew. Firstly, teachers – at all levels of their careers – need to think more carefully about what their current practices entail and be more critical of exactly what contexts they are practising *from*. I use practising *from* as a way of arguing that, at the core of this disconnect, is the fact that teachers' practices are not being carefully reflected upon in terms of their entanglements with past experiences – and their visions – of education. Teachers, according to Shulman (2013), should *enact* teaching, rather than merely acting it, meaning: "acting in a manner that is self-conscious with respect to what their act is a case of, or to what their act entails" (p. 10).

So far, I have explained that this disconnect between visions and practices in physics education has a temporal dimension pervaded by an unexamined educational past that informs teachers' current practices. I have demonstrated that, for teachers to be able to teach in accordance with social change, there needs first to be a clear understanding of how one's practices are informed by one's past; and the extent to which that reflects one's visions for the present of education. Nevertheless, acquiring the consciousness of

such a presence of the *past* in teachers' present practices requires a deeper understanding of the concept of practices according to post-structural perspectives, and its connection to knowledge and subjectivity, which I will now outline.

Practices, knowledge and subjectivities

From the 1970s onwards, a diverse set of theories in the humanities and social sciences witnessed an increased focus on the role of practices in human life. One of the contributors to this focus, Theodore Schatzki (2001), defined practices as "the source and carrier of meaning, language, and normativity" (p. 21), as well as of knowledge. Within Schatzki's framework, practices are considered to encompass a wide variety of activities with embodied and social-material aspects that forge shared meanings. Furthermore, he argues that knowledge and practice cannot be understood separately because they construct one another; meaning that knowledge is also inherently marked by its contextual, embodied and socio-material aspects. It is within this entanglement of the contextualized and intertwined relationship between knowledge and practices that feminist theories intersect with the practice turn in contemporary theory conceptualized by Schatzki.

Scholars such as Harding (1991) and Haraway (1988) define all knowledge as partial – because it is historically, socially and culturally specific. These feminist conceptions of knowledge emphatically state that knowledge is inherently subjective because it cannot be separated from the knower and their social and cultural standings (Harding, 1991; Haraway, 1988). Consequently, through these lenses, knowledge is always situated: it is dependent upon the context in which it is made, on the subject positions of the individuals involved and on their practices as embodied actions. Thus, if we wish to further understand how practices are embedded in knowledge construction, is also important to consider the relationship of these concepts with the idea of subjectivities.

According to Vick and Martinez (2011), subjectivities can be understood, as different and multiple subject positions that individuals occupy at any given moment; and such subject positions can refer to different dimensions of an individual's identity and social standing. Moreover, subjectivities are seen as multiple, unstable and embodied positions – thus, not an abstract aspect of someone's psyche (Vick and Martinez, 2011) since cognition needs to be understood as a product of both the body and the mind (Viktorelius and Sellberg, 2022). As a concept, subjectivity expands beyond identity because it encompasses how individuals become subjects in relation to society's power structures. Moreover, individuals construct multiple and paradoxical subjectivities through a variety of everyday practices, a process called subjecthood (Davies, 2006).

What I have shown so far is how, through the combination of post-structuralist and feminist theoretical traditions, these three concepts – practices, knowledge and subjectivities – build on one another. The framework thus generated positions practices centrally in the understanding of knowledge and subjectivities, enabling one to see how everyday practices construct both knowledge and subjectivities. For example, when physics teachers make references to science fiction during a lecture or pick space equipment as a theme for a certain physics project, they are connecting the discipline of physics to specific technomasculine subjectivities (Hasse, 2015). The practice of teaching physics teaches students more than just the "objective" and "neutral" knowledge of physics since the way in which nature is conceptualized and systematized is itself marked by subjective positions in terms of cultural, social and historical underpinnings, as feminist scholars have shown (Harding, 1991, 1998; Haraway, 1988). Thus, physics teachers also teach knowledge about the norms embedded in the physics culture and, consequently, which subjectivities belong in physics. This happens in a way that reflects historical connections between physics, space exploration and science fiction, which have been part of most physics teachers' experience as physics students. The fact that, as Hasse (2015) observed, physics teachers rarely use examples regarding the development of equipment related to medical care or climate change mitigation, indicates the types of knowledge and subjectivities that are historically neglected in physics culture.

The understanding of practices that I have outlined positions teachers' practices at a pivotal point in terms of how knowledge and subjectivity are constructed in the classroom, both for the teachers themselves and for the students. It makes it apparent that it is through the set of classroom activities that students and teachers build several types of knowledge – including but not limited to the discipline content – and negotiate their multiple subject positions in relation to social, cultural, historical and material aspects. Consequently, physics teachers' practices, which are at the core of this temporal disconnect, need to be considered in terms of the types of knowledge and subject positions that the enacting of these practices constructs. When it comes to understanding the context teachers practise, it is vital to carefully analyse how these contexts are dominated by specific knowledges and subjectivities. Having set the theoretical background for understanding teachers' practices through poststructuralist and feminist conceptualizations of knowledge and subjectivities, in the following section I discuss the normative regimes that govern such practices.

Normative regimes in science and education

I have argued that teachers' practices need to be understood in terms of how they produce certain knowledges and subjectivities in a way that creates a temporal disconnect between the enacting of those practices and the teachers' intentions. Now, I would like to add another important layer to this analysis; namely, that teachers' practices also have to be understood in relation to the complex, ambiguous and multiple ways in which they commit to – and disavow – normative regimes within science and education. As shown in the previous sections, practices are not conceived and performed in a vacuum – they are always a product of a certain context and, in the case of teachers' practices, they are mostly affected by the normative dynamics that lie behind education and science.

Post-structuralist thought sees knowledge construction as inherently implicated in unequal power relations, which in turn makes classrooms into spaces where discrimination and oppression are perpetuated (Kessler et al., 1985; Alton-Lee et al., 1993; Gutierrez and Rymes, 1995; Lang, 2011; Jones, 1999). Furthermore, according to feminist theories, knowledge – including scientific knowledge – cannot be separated from an individual's subjectivities. In fact, many scholars have demonstrated the hegemony of predominantly white, Western, hetero-masculine perspectives on the scientific field (Harding, 1998; Haraway, 1988; Spivak, 2005). Concealed beneath ideas of "neutral" and "objective" knowledge, scientific knowledge systematically positions certain subjectivities as more knowledgeable than others (Harding, 1991; Spivak, 2005; Mohanty, 1984). Thus, some subjectivities are more readily recognized as knowledgeable and scientifically competent, including in terms of teachers' subjectivities.

Science is overwhelmingly marked, both currently and historically, by discriminatory practices in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, class, disability and many other factors. Hence, these inequalities need to be analysed in an intersectional manner that is sensitive to how social relations construct one another (Crenshaw, 1989, 1996; Collins and Bilge, 2020; Acker, 2006, 2012). This means that the examples relating to physicists' hobbies produce and reproduce a certain type of knowledge and subjective positions related to a variety of aspects depending on the context – such as gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity and race. Thus, physics teachers' practices in the classroom transmit knowledge to students about the norms of the physics culture – such as that physicists should like science fiction (Hasse, 2002). However, these normative regimes affecting science and education are not only based on the aforementioned social markers of race, gender, sexuality, etc. Normative regimes are also construed around *teaching*, as in normative ways of practising teaching.

Physics teachers' practices can include aspects such as grading assignments or talking informally with students about a new lunch spot close by. However, only a limited selection of teachers' practices are normally considered, by students and teachers alike, as teaching. This is reflected in Vick and Martinez's (2011) argument that, in order for a teacher's practice to be perceived as teaching, it needs to be coupled with shared meanings connected to ideas of teaching. Hence, practices such as explaining a concept with the use of lecture slides are perceived as teaching, while discussing one's hobbies is not. The result is that, through the repetition of normative teaching practices, these practices become the sole activities that are recognized as teaching (Vick and Martinez, 2011).

This repertoire of normative teaching practices eventually develops into normative teaching regimes, which are a constellation of multiple and complex aspects of teaching – including practices but also identities, subjectivities, meanings, discourses and theories – that control and limit teachers' practices (Vick and Martinez, 2011; Trowler and Cooper, 2002). Additionally, normative teaching regimes can also strengthen other normative regimes, such as gender regimes (Vick and Martinez, 2011). One example can be found in Hasse's ethnographic study of bachelor's physics degrees in the Danish context, where physics teachers favoured "innovative playful male students by praising their innovations, even if they had strayed from the task of the textbook", whilst they were annoyed by female students' demands for more instructions regarding these exercises (Hasse, 2002, p. 261). Therefore, these normative teaching regimes reflect the normative dynamics at the core of science, such as playful masculinity or technomasculinity, as Hasse's research demonstrated.

There are many implications of normative teaching regimes that are worth exploring, especially in terms of expanding the set of pedagogical practices that are considered to be teaching. However, for the purposes of this paper, it is important to consider the practices that are not related to teaching the content of the discipline of physics, but to the norms of physics culture. As I have repeated throughout this paper, students learn about the physics culture while learning physics, and teachers' practices that *teach* these norms to students are not only the pedagogical practices. For example, a physics teacher, might refrain from using science-fiction references when lecturing, but just the mere act of the teacher wearing a science-fiction-themed T-shirt while doing so might serve to reify to students the connections between physics and technomasculinity that are present in the physics culture. What it is crucial to highlight here is that, although practices such as talking about one's hobbies or wearing a science-fiction-themed T-shirt are not considered teaching – since they do not teach the content of physics – within the theoretical framework presented in this paper they do teach *something*, albeit the norms of the physics culture.

I have shown how the normative regimes in education and science dictate both the type of people who belong in physics, and also how one perceives what counts as physics *teaching*. As a consequence of this dynamic, the normative aspects of physics culture become an implicit and unreflected part of the physics curriculum. I am arguing that it is precisely this *invisible dimension of teaching* in teachers' practices that creates the temporal disconnect between teachers' intentions and practices in relation to social change. However, this invisible teaching can become visible if one directs one's attention towards an ignored aspect of the teacher's practices: the body, to which I now turn.

The embodied practices of physics teachers

The embodied dimension of teachers' practices enables one to see how the body plays a central role in creating and enforcing normativity. Despite teachers' visions and motives, their seemingly unimportant non-pedagogical practices, like wearing a science-fiction-themed and not a basketball-themed T-shirt, communicate a manifold set of meanings and can even counteract the pedagogical outcomes of the classroom (Vick and Martinez, 2011). An example of this can be found in the account below from a physics teacher about a classroom activity where students discussed their ideas about who physicists are:

> […] this year students confessed that some of the descriptions generated during this activity, such as White men wearing glasses and dress shirts, were based on my appearance. This was a revelation to me: while I long since realized that I embody many of the characteristics of a stereotypical physicist, I didn't realize the extent to which some students view *me* as the paradigm for what a physicist looks like. (Gosling, 2020, p. 181)

Gosling's example shows that, despite his intention and pedagogical efforts, the social markers of his body, through his everyday repertoire of practices in the classroom, served to install an unintended message in his students' minds. The vision that his students acquired was very much connected to normative ideas about physicists and scientists (Hughes, 2001; Carlone, 2004; Jammula and Mensah, 2020; Hasse, 2015), which are also located in the body (Ong, 2005). When analysing teachers' practices, it is important to also analyse how the teacher's body plays a role in the enactment of these practices and, consequently, in the meanings, knowledge and subjectivities that are constructed through them.

Vick and Martinez (2011) argue that teachers' bodies are marked by gender, race, class, shape, health, gait, shape and many other aspects that indicate both physical and socio-cultural attributes. Hence, the practices enacted through teachers' bodies will inherently carry meanings regarding such markers. Examples in the context of physics teachers are the need during laboratory experiments for a certain type of body to handle heavy laboratory equipment, as well as having embodied experience with tools (Gonsalves et al., 2016) – characteristics that are associated with different types of masculinity, as well as able-bodiedness. These examples demonstrate how the taken-for-granted embodied practices of teachers in the laboratory relate to students' knowledge about the gendered dynamics of physics work. Thus, through teachers' *embodied* practices, they are constructing and negotiating knowledge and subjectivities in relation to such factors *through* their bodies. The result is that the body of the teacher is the locus where unequal power dynamics take place, albeit the body is hardly a central aspect of educational discussions.

A critical aspect of Vick and Martinez's (2011) argument is that teachers carrying body markers associated with socially marginalized groups can have more difficulty being perceived by students as figures of authority than teachers whose bodies more readily fit into normative regimes. For example, a physics teacher in Denmark wearing a religious headscarf or crucifix around their neck will possibly encounter more barriers to being perceived as a credible physicist due to the simple fact of showcasing a religious stance. This is due to the perceived incompatibility of simultaneously holding religious and scientific subjectivities, at least publicly, in certain Northern-European countries (Hasse & Trentemøller, 2008). As post-structural thought has demonstrated, some bodies are perceived, consciously or unconsciously, as more knowledgeable and/or suitable for the role of teaching physics than others.

Teachers' practices are overwhelmingly embodied; hence, the body of the teacher matters when reflecting upon the meanings enacted through a certain practice. Through a wide variety of physics teachers' practices, such as explaining theoretical concepts, handling radioactive material, referring to space exploration endeavours, laughing at a student's joke or moving their bodies across the labs, teachers are, intentionally or inadvertently, creating knowledge and subjectivities in a relational process with their students. Vick and Martinez (2011) warned of the pitfalls of considering teachers' practices at an abstract level that ignores the embodied dimensions of practices, because it leaves "a vast reservoir of taken-for-granted (embodied) practices that constitute teachers' daily performance of their work unexamined and uncritiqued" (p. 180). The consequence of ignoring the body in teachers' practices is that it conceals the effects of such practices. To create new and transgressive practices, it is necessary to pay careful attention to the types of knowledge and subjectivities that are enacted

through teachers' bodies. If, earlier on, I demonstrated the importance of teachers' practices in teaching about normative aspects of the physics culture, I have now argued for the need to understand the centrality of these practices in terms of their embodiment too. Creating a critical awareness of the embodied dimension of physics teachers' practices is a starting point for identifying ways of teaching differently which can bring equality, diversity and inclusive visions to the reality of the physics classroom.

Conclusion

Many educational settings and teachers are committed to visions of physics that seek to transform the elitist and discriminatory practices at the core of physics so that it can become a field of study and inquiry in which a wide variety of individuals can equally belong and succeed. However, how to actually practise such abstractions in the context of the physics classroom remains relatively unexplored, both in the literature and in educational settings. The classroom practices of physics are still undoubtedly marked by a normative repertoire belonging to a certain educational past, while teachers are increasingly being asked to teach in alignment with current diversity and inclusion agendas. At the core of this temporal disconnect are teachers' practices, which are still strongly informed by a view of the classroom that belongs to the past. Motivated by this conundrum, and following Verran's (2014) question about how one can "learn to work with those who think otherwise" (p. 538), in this paper I have grappled with the question of how teachers can learn to teach otherwise.

Through a careful analysis of relevant scholarship stemming from the Global North, this paper has demonstrated the interconnectedness of teachers' embodied practices with social inequalities within physics culture. Drawing mostly upon post-structuralist perspectives on teaching, practices, knowledge and subjectivities, including feminist theories, I have discussed the implications of understanding teachers' practices as *embodied* practices, because doing so brings to the fore the normative dynamics of the taken-for-granted and invisible practices of physics teachers. These norms are transmitted through teachers' embodied practices, resulting in ideas such as that physicists do not, or should not, play basketball, dance or knit. Thus, the gender norms that place some individuals in a more precarious position within the physics culture – among other social-cultural norms – are reified not only by what teachers say, but also by how they use their bodies. Teachers learn to dress, smile, move and speak – namely, to *behave* – in a way that signals how they belong, or do not belong, to a certain discipline, and through these embodied practices they teach about the norms of the physics culture.

Teachers' embodied practices are a product of their own past experiences in education and, hence, can reproduce normative ideas about science, education and physics if they are not duly reflected upon. This means that physics teachers need to be more aware of the contexts *from which* they are practising in terms of the overlooked embodied dimensions of these practices. Building on Vick and Martinez's (2011) argument about the centrality of the body in teachers' practices, I have advocated in this paper for the importance of understanding physics teachers' embodied practices, because doing so bridges the gap between the equality that teachers strive to achieve *in* and *through* education, and what they actually end up doing in practice.

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'Be a man, bro!': Men, masculinities and mental health

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Abstract

This paper has been developed on the basis of theoretical and methodological reflections emerging within the author's doctoral research, which asks: how can we analyse men's mental health without falling into the mainstream rhetoric that labels them the 'new victims' of (supposed) post-feminist societies? How can we explore men's multiple experiences (emotional and beyond), while taking into account their agency within (Western) heteropatriarchal societies?

Specifically, this paper discusses the intersection between masculinities and health through the lens of Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities (CSMM), using the theory of hegemonic masculinity. The author aims to critically examine certain theoretical positions within men's health studies, suggesting that health practices cannot be understood outside their social context.

Lastly, focusing on the specific field of men's mental health studies, the need to complexify research on men, masculinities and mental health through an intersectional approach is emphasized, examining the interaction between gender and other ascribed variables, and critiquing the heteropatriarchal, neoliberal, racist and ableist structures of Western societies.

Keywords: hegemonic masculinity, CSMM, men's health, mental health, well-being, emotions.

Introduction

> […] The strength of the masculine order is seen in the fact that it dispenses with justification:6 the androcentric vision imposes itself as neutral and has no need to spell itself out in discourses aimed at legitimating it.

> (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 17)

This paper consists of an introductory and critical reflection on the study of the intersection between masculinities and health, from a perspective pertaining to *critical studies on men and masculinities* (CSMM). More precisely, it has been conceived as a critique of certain theoretical positionings within men's health studies with the goal of proposing an alternative view on the study of men's health experiences based on the theory of hegemonic masculinity.

This article takes up the theory of hegemonic masculinity and the debate that has recently emerged surrounding transformations in traditional norms of dominant masculinity within Western societies. These references allow us to grasp the specific intersection between masculinity and health: firstly, by critically examining some of the theoretical positions that have arisen within men's health studies and, secondly, by analysing how healthcare practices cannot be divorced from the social context in which they are enacted. Finally, the focus turns to the specific field of men's health studies, emphasizing the need to position research on men through an intersectional lens, examining the interplay between gender and other variables such as race, ethnicity, class and sexuality. In fact, investigating how masculinity informs health entails exploring the connections between gender practices and the 'practices' of self-care.

Historically, men's health and illness have not been a subject of academic research or clinical interest in themselves. In health research, attention has been predominantly devoted to women, pathologizing female bodies and those that do not conform to norms of gender, sexuality and race. Conversely, the bodies – and thus health – of men, assumed to be the norm, have never been subject to the same level of interest, as they have been considered inherently 'healthy' and non-suffering subjects (McKenzie, 2017).

The next section is dedicated to outlining the theory of hegemonic masculinity and delving into reflections on the multiplicity of ways of 'doing manhood'.

Hegemonic subject

Who are the subjects representing this hegemonic masculinity? They are those who embody the (heteropatriarchal and racist) norm, the undisputed holders of the right to occupy public space. Hegemonic subjects are the 'bodies that matter [most, Ed.]' (Butler, 1996, p. 9), the bodies that inhabit the 'centre' (hooks, 1984) by which the margins – to which others are relegated – are defined.

As Wittig (2018) notes, the masculine is a kind of transparent veil through which Western culture views the world, while naturalizing this viewpoint. Indeed, Western knowledge itself is based on a dualistic and dichotomous ordering of reality: nature/culture, reason/irrationality, identity/difference, self/other, mind/body, man/woman. In this ordering, within these dichotomies, there is an explicit domination of the first term over the second. This dominance is produced and reproduced to the extent that, within Western thought, the first term defines what *is*, relegating the second to what *is not*. Thus, where the *One* is the essential – the pure, the true and the authentic – the *Other* is the inessential, the abject and that which is excluded from the sphere of knowledge.

The impossibility of conceiving the masculine as a gender – which has long been guaranteed by the assumption, within Western societies, of the masculine as universal, as the norm that makes other living beings intelligible[1] – has been undermined by the emergence of studies concerning the multiple social experiences of men (Kimmel, 2001) conducted within CSMM since the 1970s. Such studies have shown that the masculine is not (and has never been) thought of in terms of gender; in contrast to women, whose social position relentlessly reproduces their female status (Volpato, 2013).

As Kimmel states, although man has been, and still is, the subject *par excellence* of History, men are rarely (if ever) studied in terms of men and masculinities, made an object of investigation to examine men's lives. In order to analyse masculinity as a gender, it is necessary to recognize and investigate the multiple realities that men experience within society and the different relationships they establish with the *patriarchal dividend* that they enjoy (Connell, 1995), to a greater or lesser extent, in heteropatriarchal societies. In fact, the concept of masculinity is influenced by cultural,

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[1] As feminist thinkers have pointed out, identifying the masculine with the universal similarly legitimizes the identification of the masculine with reason and with the progress of civilization, relegating women to the subordinate sphere of the 'naturalness' of emotions and feelings. Public life, where *logos* must be exercised, thus belongs to man/reason; while, instead, woman/nature belongs in the private sphere, where she can best express her inclinations to care and participate in the benefits of reason, exercising the relative roles of wife and mother.

social, historical and economic factors and varies widely between different societies and historical periods.

The following section, in line with the objective of this paper, is an attempt to provide an overview of the positioning of CSMM, in order subsequently to critically analyse the approach of some studies on men's health that have inappropriately generalized men's reality, without examining the complexities of men's own experiences.

Hegemonic masculinity

From a CSMM perspective, it is widely recognized that there are different ways of being a man (in the sense of 'playing a man's role'), which vary from era to era and from society to society. These different models of masculinity are hierarchically ordered and endowed with different degrees of legitimacy and social acceptance. The construction of gender differences, in fact, grants a series of economic and social privilege to men, which Connell refers to as the *patriarchal dividend* (Connell, 1995).

According to Connell, there are four dimensions that produce and reproduce the gender inequalities from which men benefit: labour, power relations, *cathexis* and symbolic production.

The first of these dimensions (labour) refers to the gendered division of labour and to the persistence of a severe gender pay gap in favour of men. Gender inequalities within the labour market have been referred to as *gendered accumulation*. This term refers to the process of appropriation by the capitalist (and patriarchal) system of domestic and care work, which is carried out almost free of charge by women.

With the concept of power relations, Connell is referring instead to the social, political and institutional power differentials between men and women, with the former playing the dominant roles.

The dimension of *cathexis*, derived from psychoanalysis, is used within the theory of hegemonic masculinity to recognize how sexual and affective desire itself can contribute to the maintenance of a hierarchical gender order.

Finally, Connell emphasizes that the symbolic system characterizing a specific culture defines both the social interests it embodies and the underlying meaning of the gender categories themselves.

With these premises, Connell affirms the uneven male participation in the patriarchal dividend. The author attempts, consequently, to construct a tool for understanding the

internal and external dynamics of masculinities which considers the fact that these can never be teased apart from the particular social, cultural and historical context in which they take place.

Connell identifies four representations of masculinity: hegemonic, complicit, subordinate and marginal. Hegemonic masculinity serves as the reference model for all other masculinities within a specific social, cultural and historical context. It is defined as the set of practices, styles and discourses that, in a given historical context, represent the idealized way of enacting masculinity. In other words, hegemonic masculinity is the one that legitimizes and reproduces patriarchal dynamics. Complicit masculinities, meanwhile, contribute to legitimizing and promoting the hegemonic model, benefiting from the patriarchal privileges held by the latter. Then, there are the subordinate masculinities (those discriminated against due, for example, to their non-heterosexual orientation) and, finally, marginal masculinities, so defined because they are enacted by individuals who are excluded from full social participation, such as men belonging to an ethnic minority.

To better understand these representations of masculinity, it is helpful to delve into the concept of hegemony used by Connell. Her choice of the adjective 'hegemonic' is not accidental. She borrows it from Gramsci's political reflections (Gramsci, 1975). Gramsci's concept of hegemony describes the process by which dominant classes obtain and maintain power over other social classes. This power is defined as 'epistemic' because it defines the framework of meaning within which reality is interpreted. According to Gramsci, hegemony emphasizes the cultural and moral dimensions of the exercise of political power. It is, therefore, a form of domination based on the balance between coercion and consent. While the power of coercion manifests itself in the ability to exercise legitimate violence, Gramsci hypothesizes that dominant classes also maintain their privileged position by creating cultural models through which they generate the consent of subordinate classes (regarding the legitimacy of the dominant class's privileged position).

This control over subordinates thus also translates into the exercise of intellectual authority, the ability to influence how subordinates think and act and the shaping of social and cultural habits. It is important to clarify, however, that – according to Gramsci – hegemony implies an awareness of domination by the dominated. Gramsci asserts that the dominated are not reduced to the status of passive actors, but can overturn the power that subjugates them. The peculiarity of this concept lies in its interpretation of hegemony itself as being, not an unchangeable state of affairs, but susceptible to change, transformation and questioning of the hegemonic class. It is, therefore, a dynamic process.

Applied to the study of masculinities, the concept of hegemony highlights the existence of a cultural and idealized model of masculinity that, defining itself as the reference point of subjectivities, legitimizes specific hierarchical relations within and between genders. In particular, the creation of an internal hierarchy within the constructions of masculinity serves to consolidate male authority in gender relations, as seen in the previous paragraph concerning homosociality. In this sense, hegemonic masculinity embodies a strategy that is considered valid for the defence of patriarchy (Connell, 1995). Specifically, it functions as a regulatory ideal and cultural model to which men refer in constructing their own masculinity.

This introduction is necessary to understand how, today, the theory of hegemonic masculinity makes it possible to investigate masculinities in the most diverse areas of research. As mentioned earlier, this paper focuses on the area of men's health studies, which are attempting to take on this theory in their research on masculine experiences of well-being, illness, the medicalization of the human body and psyche and access to (medical) care.

Men, masculinities and health

The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has widely demonstrated that, at least in Western societies, the health of human beings is only seriously questioned and investigated when it is out of the control of individuals; that is, when we move from well-being to illness. Moreover, health, in Western societies, is strongly linked to its corporeal dimension. Bodies and bodily practices have been instrumentally rationalized as an instrument of work and fatigue, while retaining, in the collective imagination, their function as the primary symbol of the concept of the individual as a civilized being, master of himself [sic] and, indeed, of his own body (Ghigi and Sassatelli, 2018). Thus, the body turns out to be both the object of discipline and the instrument through which to resist it, expressing alternative definitions of the concepts of identity and reality.

As Foucault (2014) argues, the body is not merely a biological datum. On the contrary, it is part of a more thoroughly articulated practice of signification, through which the body itself becomes a situated political construction within precise power dynamics: the sexualized body, the racialized body, the gendered body. Starting with the French philosopher's reflections (Foucault, 2014), feminist theories have focused on female and male bodies, repudiating their non-neutrality and recognizing them as mere cultural artefacts produced and reproduced by power dynamics.

In the introduction to this paper, reference was made to the dichotomous system upon which Western thought is based. The mind–body duality has contributed hugely to defining the diversity between men and women, rooting it in different meanings, in radically opposed ontological conceptions.

Women, historically, have been associated with (and relegated to) corporeality, nature and reproduction, while men have been linked to mind, reason and control. These different meanings are strongly reflected in the lives of individuals, in their health and their own predisposition to care. Indeed, as Robertson (2007) notes, men's bodies, particularly in biomedical literature, are considered to be less demanding and less sensitive, less prone to transience and illness, reiterating the idea that men 'cannot be sick', and legitimizing the mechanistic conception of their bodies and sexuality.

> When we think about 'men's health' what are the thoughts and images that come to mind? Do we think of athletes, exercise and six-packs? Is it corporate businessman straining to combine success at work with a quality home life and collapsing at 50 with a heart attack? Do we simply think of male-specific illness or disease such as testicular and prostate cancer? Are we most likely to think of unhealthy behaviours, of alcohol and drug abuse, poor diet, fast driving and violence? Or do we think about mental well-being, of difficulties in emotional expression and associated suicide rates particularly for young men? Is it about having to show themselves as strong, stoical and if so how does that account for the 'Man Flu' syndrome where (supposedly) a simple cold results in men taking rapidly to bed and needing to be tended to by a female partner? (Robertson, 2007, p. 1)

Since the mid-1980s, the concept of *men's health* has gained great popularity within the mainstream media and academic research. Since those years, there have been many discussions and debates surrounding the use of this concept. Above all, there has been much talk about the crisis in men's health and the negative impact that masculinity (wrongly believed to be unique and universal) has on men. Within this train of thought, Robertson notes, there are two dominant discourses. On the one hand, men are considered to be indifferent to (or, at worst, clueless about) issues concerning their own health. On the other hand, they are regarded as 'victims' of the claims made by women and other non-hegemonic social groups, which are said to have generated a real (political, social, economic and identity) 'crisis of masculinity'. This crisis is also, in some cases, attributed with the power to affect the health of individuals or, rather, of men.

Despite such popularity, therefore, men's health has long been studied only from the perspective of these limited and generalizing conceptions of masculinity. Several social scientists and health professionals, on closer inspection, have used the *sex-role paradigm*

to investigate men's health, assuming, however, that there is a normative, univocal and universal masculinity, which is an expression of all the multiple experiences that men have, have had and will have of their own health. The object of investigation in this approach is reduced to data on the mortality and morbidity of the male population, without investigating the health-related experiences and behaviour of men themselves, or the meanings they attach to it. For example, reference is often made to the aforementioned (and clear) difference in mortality rates between men and women, but without reflecting on the fact that male mortality is also much more often caused by motor vehicle accidents or alcohol and drug abuse (Robertson, 2007).

The theory of gender roles, developed between the 1960s and 1970s, explores the systemic differences in behaviours between men and women, interpreting these differences as attributable to socialization and the resulting conditioning of male and female gender roles. However, this theory has received significant criticism (Butler, 1996) for not paying attention to the contextual, historical and cultural settings within which these gender roles (both masculine and feminine) are learned. The theory of gender roles aimed to highlight the patriarchal construction of these roles, yet it failed to deconstruct the very concept of 'sex', which was considered innate. Consequently, on the one hand, this theory did not question the social construction of sex,[2] while, on the other hand, it lent itself to essentialist conceptions, suggesting that transgender women were not truly women.

Positioning oneself within a feminist and gendered approach to men's health studies, however, it is necessary to recognize that – while criticizing sex-role theory, as Lohan (2007) points out in reference to gender inequalities in health and men's health studies – it is not always clear which differences in health between men and women are due to sex and which to gender. In other words, it is not always clear what, in the field of health and medicine, depends on factors intrinsic to the body and what depends on the acquisition of social practices by particular subjects.

> Feminist research has illustrated the complex processes by which biological facts are contextually defined and therefore gendered. For example, a significant body of feminist research has illustrated that biomedical research showing men's higher morbidity in relation to circulatory disease fails to acknowledge the systematic trend of and under-reporting and under-diagnosis of heart disease amongst women, leading to an under-estimation of women's morbidity and mortality in this key category. Thus, what is 'biological' and what is 'gender' is difficult to discern. Similarly, CSMM's health research has been sceptical of a 'competing victims' approach to research which lists the various ways in which men's health is disadvantaged, relative to women's without due

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[2] As later addressed by queer and post-structuralist feminism, see Butler, 2013.

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consideration of the complex processes by which health statistics are gendered. (Lohan, 2007, p. 495)

Consequently, it can be recognized that affirming a biological difference does not mean affirming its immutability, since biology itself is processual and in continuous interaction with the external environment. As CSMM have pointed out, one must therefore bear in mind that the very statistics and surveys focusing on female and/or male health are gendered.

Recognizing, therefore, that 'health practices' – that is, the set of health-related behaviours and experiences – cannot be fully understood outside the social context in which they occur, the concluding section of this paper attempts to account for how men's practices intersect with mental health.

An (almost) conclusion: 'cos boys don't cry', are you sure?

> As men we learn to live a lie. We learn to live as if we were 'rational agents' in the sense that we live beyond nature. We learn to live as if our emotional lives do not exist, at least as far as the 'public world' is concerned. [...] We learn to live in our minds as the source of our identities. If we had our way as men it would be that our emotional lives did not exist at all.
>
> (Seidler, 1994, p. 19)

In the literature, there are a number of researchers investigating men's health through the CSMM approach in order to explore the relationship between masculinities and male oppression (Oliffe et al., 2010; Oliffe et al., 2012; Coen et al., 2013; Oliffe et al., 2013), suicidal behaviour (Cleary, 2005; River, 2014) and help-seeking practices (Roy, Tremblay and Robertson, 2014; Oliffe et al., 2022).

As Robertson (2007) notes in his seminal text on health, masculinity and well-being, there is a need to take more account of men's narratives about mental health, both their own and in general, as well as their access to health services (in a broad sense).

Through focus groups and in-depth interviews, Robertson investigated the relationship between masculinities and men's health practices.[3] The author highlighted how the sphere of affectivity, emotions and interpersonal relationships is central to men's perceptions of their own well-being and health, as well as for all other gender identities. Furthermore, Robertson notes how strongly it has emerged, during the various research studies he has conducted on men's mental health studies, – how much difficulty men have in perceiving mental health as a relevant health issue (or, more trivially, as a health issue at all).

Mental health and, consequently, mental illness are often considered secondary problems and/or highly stigmatizing issues. Unlike physical illness, which is a legitimate reason for access to health services, the need for help and care for one's mental health is considered unnecessary because it pertains to a sphere of life related to subjective and therefore irrelevant issues.

O'Brien, Hunt and Hart (2005)[4], among others, have noted that seeking help for depression confronts men with difficult challenges that are inherent to their masculinities. This is often directly linked to (patriarchal) narratives of complete independence, self-sufficiency and self-control into which men are socialized, and which they are expected to embody. However, it should also be recognized that much research has identified some help-seeking practices enacted by men, such as sharing their mental health problems with friends, family and partners.

As seen through this brief overview of the literature, sociological work on men's mental health cannot overlook studies on emotions. Emotional expression, as well as emotional restraint, is always culturally and historically situated. In the research on men's mental health, it is therefore necessary to situate emotions within the broader historical, cultural and everyday context, rather than considering them as mere 'passive responses' to ongoing social changes.

Discussions regarding the relationship between men, masculinities, mental health and different modes of expressing distress often rely on broader assumptions about gender and emotions (Chandler, 2019). In the field of studies on men, masculinities and

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[3] Robertson interviewed 20 men (of different ages, sexual orientations and health conditions) and seven healthcare professionals. The research was conducted in the United Kingdom and, therefore, pertains to a specific model of healthcare and of the National Health Service. However, despite this, Robertson's conclusions remain valid and particularly significant even when applied to other Western countries (Oliffe, 2008).

[4] The researchers interviewed 55 men (ranging in age from 15 to 72 years) residing in Scotland. These men, despite having diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and work experience, all suffered from prostate cancer, coronary diseases or mental health issues.

emotions, de Boise and Hearn (2017) have identified three different research perspectives concerning the relationship between emotions and masculinities.

Firstly, there is the perspective of so-called *inclusive masculinity*, which rejects the discourse on the 'crisis of masculinity' and acknowledges men's increasing ability to engage with their own emotions, indicating a redefinition of masculinity itself (Anderson, 2009).

There are, then, some authors who reflect on the *hybridization of masculinity*. While they recognize a change in men's and boys' masculinities (in relation to their emotions and within gender relations), they believe that these 'new' forms of masculinity also contribute to reproducing gender inequalities (Bridges and Pascoe, 2014).

Finally, there is the *constructionist* perspective, which does not recognize any element of novelty in the relationship between men and emotions. It considers men's engagement with their emotional sphere to be culturally defined and constructed. In this sense, certain emotions (historically, socially and culturally situated) have always guided men's actions (de Boise and Hearn, 2017).

Consequently, when investigating the relationship between emotions, men and masculinities, it is necessary to consider 'the political implications, particularly in how social factors regulate the development and circulation of emotions, and how these necessarily shift with social change' (de Boise and Hearn, 2017, p. 787).

Exploring men's emotions and how they understand and experience them is crucial for studies on male mental health and for improving well-being and mental health status among men. However, as noted by de Boise and Hearn (2017), special attention must be paid to the relationship between the development and expression of emotions, on the one hand, and the context in which they are enacted, on the other. In other words, attention must be given to the social, contextual and situational variables that contribute to the generation of specific emotions. Therefore, the research project on the relationship between masculinities and mental health within which this paper is embedded – which takes place in Italy – focuses on the intersection between gender and two specific social variables: class and age.

The first variable was chosen in order to delve into the experiences of approaching and accessing mental health care within the National Health System. In Italy, psychotherapeutic and psychiatric mental health treatments are mainly provided by private facilities and are often very expensive (Facchini, March 2023). Additionally, class – whether measured by income, education or occupation – is known to be the factor that most influences individual health throughout life, from childhood to adolescence and adulthood (Watkins, Walker and Griffith, 2010).

In terms of the age variable, the research aims to explore the relationship and coexistence of young men (aged between 20 and 40 years) with depressive disorders during their transition into adulthood. Sociology has long been interested in the social processes of transitioning from adolescence to adulthood (Leccardi, 2005), but there are still only a few studies that include the intersection of masculinity and mental health in the study of the transition to adulthood.

Moreover, within the debate on transformations of masculinities (Bridges and Pascoe, 2014), it has not yet been analysed whether (and how) the relationship between the construction of one's masculinity and the self-care of one's mental health is undergoing generational transformations. Consequently, the project aims to understand how the new generations of males relate to the sphere of mental health and the stigma that still too often accompanies it.

A qualitative research approach will be employed because it is believed that the behaviours related to a specific experience, such as mental health, are always correlated with the sociocultural context in which the experience takes place. This approach is considered in order to enable a deep understanding of the social variables that act in a given context and explain how they can influence the phenomenon under study (Watkins, Walker and Griffith, 2010).

In conclusion, the reflections contained in this text are part of a broader research project that will be carried out over the next two years. In particular, the research aims to investigate the influence of gender practices on living with a mental disorder and, consequently, on the practices of self-care and help-seeking adopted by men.

The intention of this research project, therefore, is to contribute to a deeper exploration of how the practices of masculinity, in all their diversity and everyday contextual enactment, inform the self-care of men who live with depressive symptoms.

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Lying as a feminist: addressing researchers' lies in social science's qualitative methodology

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Abstract

The lies a researcher tells during fieldwork are one of those 'secrets' of the research process that is neither often nor easily addressed in academic discussion. In line with the contributions of feminist research, this article proposes, not to justify the lies that a researcher might employ in the field, but to consider lies as a part of all human social interactions from which the researcher cannot escape when doing fieldwork. By drawing on the author's experience of fieldwork in agricultural areas of Turkey between 2021 and 2022, this article proposes a reflexive analysis of the usage of lies in the qualitative methodology of social science. It is firstly argued that lying can be used in a protective mode by researchers, especially by female scholars facing situations of gender-based violence in the field. Lies are then considered indicators of the dilemmas a social scientist might face during fieldwork while trying to move towards a feminist methodology. Finally, this paper envisages the hypothesis of analysing lies from a methodological perspective as a resource for enabling the fieldwork research to be conducted.

Keywords: Lies, fieldwork, reflexivity, positionality, feminist methodology, Turkey

Introduction

When I raise the topic of this article in conversations with other social scientists, the reactions I observe most often are opposition or rejection. Talking about the researcher's lies in a scientific article seems at best unusual or eccentric, and at worst inconceivable, pointless or even wrong. However, once I started to explain what I meant by lying during fieldwork – i.e., all the situations where the researcher comes to terms with the truth by bending it, omitting it or partially concealing it – fellow researchers started to show interest, and sometimes even ended up sharing anecdotes from the field where they themselves may have lied.

As the reactions to this article show, the researcher's lies are still a taboo, one of the secrets of fieldwork that is only shared on very rare occasions. Moreover, lying in the field is rarely discussed in the scientific literature, and when it is, it often concerns the lies of informants, rather than those of the researcher (Bleek 1987; Saleh 2017). In an effort to reflect upon the research practices encouraged by feminist literature, this article addresses fieldwork's lies. The word is strong, but covers a more nuanced reality: lying during fieldwork involves a wide range of practices of different severity, from small rearrangements of the truth, to keeping silent to avoid revealing an opinion, or exaggerating certain things. Indeed, I lied on several occasions during my ethnographic study of agricultural workers in Turkey: to get out of a tricky situation, to avoid offending the person I was talking to, or to simplify an explanation about my professional situation. For a long time, I had felt uncomfortable about my 'little rearrangements of the truth' in the field. I kept these lies to myself, like a shameful secret from the field, until I read these lines from Diane Wolf:

> Creating and negotiating my identity in the field posed one particular challenge and dilemma. I felt forced to lie about the same topics about which I hoped for honesty from my respondents. I lied about my religious affiliation, my marital status, and my finances at the same time that the focus of my research was on young women's finances, family finances, and marriage. This particular representation of myself made me feel dishonest and uncomfortable, but I could not see another way out. (Wolf, 2018, p.ix).

Reading these lines made me realize that I was not the only one to face lying during fieldwork, and that if researchers more experienced than me had gone through it, then I was neither a 'bad researcher' who lacks objectivity, nor a 'bad feminist' who breaks ethical codes by not being fully transparent with her informants. Lying to informants therefore appears not to be a mistake I should be ashamed of, but one of the 'feminist dilemmas' that a researcher may face while doing fieldwork. In other words, rather than

hiding my lies, I decided to analyse them as fieldwork practices without naïveté, with the aim of contributing to ongoing reflections in feminist methodology.

Feminist studies have shown that research is not exempt from the power relations that run throughout social life; hence, I believe that social science is not exempt from the lies that exist in everyday social interactions, at different levels and for different reasons. In line with feminist studies, I therefore think it is important to work on undoing the strictly negative image that surrounds the researcher's lies and to consider lying as something that might happen, rather than keeping it on the list of things one must absolutely not do during fieldwork. The aim of this article is not to normalize lying, but to offer a reflexive analysis of the researcher's lies, based on my empirical ethnographic fieldwork with agricultural workers in Turkey. Taking up the question of lying is a reflexive exercise that I feel is important if it is not to remain an unresolved issue in social science qualitative methodology. This article does not confine itself to justifying lies uttered during fieldwork, but proposes an actual epistemological reflection upon the social scientist's lies by analysing such lying as situated practices. By drawing on my own experience of fieldwork and feminist literature, in this paper I aim to think about what generates the researcher's lies, and also to question what these lies, as research practices, reveal about the dilemmas a social scientist may face during fieldwork. In addition, this paper envisages the hypothesis of analysing lies from a methodological perspective as a resource for the research while and for conducting fieldwork.

Materials and methods

In line with feminist methodological reflections on positionality (Harding, 1992), and at the intersection of autoethnographic methods (Butz and Besio 2009; Altuntaş 2022), this article is based on several episodes of lying that occurred while I was conducting fieldwork on agricultural farms in three regions of Turkey (Izmir, Adana and Şanlıurfa) in Spring 2021, Spring 2022 and Autumn 2022. This fieldwork is part of my doctoral research into the changing social relations of class, gender and ethnicity in agricultural labour in the context of the internationalization of agricultural production in Turkey. The material I use in this paper is a collection of pages from my field notebooks as well as episodes that I developed to complement the shortcomings of immediate notetaking in the field mentioned above. I believe it is important to specify that all my interactions in the field were in Turkish, without the presence of a translator. I keep my field notebook in a mixture of Turkish, to relate exchanges that occurred in this language,

and French (my mother tongue) to express my thoughts and analyses. I have therefore translated the field notebook extracts quoted in this article into English.

I think it is necessary for the reading of this article to point out that I am a French woman in her 20s, identified by the informants as European by extension. I am enrolled in a PhD programme in France while being based in Istanbul, Turkey. I am not Turkish; I have no direct or indirect family ties with Turkey; I speak Turkish and I have known the context for several years because before to move to Istanbul at the beginning of my PhD in 2020, I have been a student at Bilgi University as part of the Erasmus+ programme in 2015–2016, and I conducted fieldwork for both of my master theses in 2017 in Adana and in 2018 in Izmir.

Analysis

Necessary lies: female scholars and lies of protection in the context of gender-based violence during fieldwork and within academia

Among the researchers who mentioned their own lies in the field, women are over-represented; the lies they mentioned are correlated with situations of gender-based and sexual violence encountered during their fieldwork. Feminist studies show that fieldwork is not exempt from the power relations that structure social life, and this applies to female scientists who are exposed to sexism and gender-based violence while conducting fieldwork and within academic environments (Golde, 1986; Toulouze, 2014; Schneider, 2020). Indeed, numerous testimonies of female scholars report that they are compelled to lie in the field to protect themselves from threats to their security. Therefore, I argue in favour of the imperative of situating lies to understand their protective potential when told during fieldwork in relation to the gender-based violence experienced by female scholars.

> Never enough? On the impasse of lying about the researcher's marital status

One of the most common expressions of the difficulty that goes with being a female fieldworker is having to face uncertainty about the intentions of male informants, who may try to move on from a professional relationship to a romantic one. They do so by playing on the ambiguity of fieldwork that puts social scientists in a situation of needing the informant to cooperate, otherwise it could compromise the pursuit of the research. It turns out that a lot of female researchers have lied at least once to informants about their marital status, which is still a 'methodological taboo' (Dua, 1979; Clair, 2016b),

to protect themselves from the unsolicited advances of informants; female researchers happen to mention an alleged boyfriend, or even a husband, and sometimes wear a fake wedding ring to give credibility to their lie. In the field, being a woman, and in my case a woman in her twenties who is also a foreign western woman working in Turkey, has been synonymous with being exposed on a regular basis to the injunction to marry. This means that I am persistently being questioned about my love life, sometimes confronted with sexual advances, and also very often being pressured to accept a date by female informants who try to persuade me to meet their sons. As one of the many examples noted in my field notebook, we can take this situation, which occurred at the Şanlıurfa agricultural fair:

> Saturday 4th December 2021, Şanlıurfa.
>
> (…) One of the women hands me her phone. On it is a photo of a man in his thirties:
>
> 'Look at the photo there, that's my son. He's an engineer, you know, he's a good lad, my son. You could come and have coffee with us. We'll make you our bride. You'll be a foreign bride. God willing!' (…) A few minutes later, she called her son and urged him to join us so that he could meet me. (…)

Navigating these social interactions, by respecting my own integrity while trying not to affect the relationship with the informants so that the research can continue, is a constant challenge that requires the performance of gender norms. As a result, one of the lies I have probably mobilized most frequently in my fieldwork has been not telling the truth about my romantic situation. During one of my first field experiences, I naively replied to a question from one of the farm workers in the Izmir region by stating that I was single. The news quickly spread around the farm and the village that 'the European girl is single' and I had to spend much of the next few days fending off offers to meet with people's sons. I ended up lying and saying that I was not married but that I had someone in mind. This interest in my marital status had interfered so much with my fieldwork that I promised myself I would not make the same mistake again. So, thinking it would help me to avoid discussions on the subject, I later declared that I was engaged, using the figure of my boyfriend at the time to avoid any inconsistencies in my lie. But then again, I was being asked about his ethnicity, his job and his family, all of which were assessed by the people I spoke to, who often came to the conclusion that I would be better off with 'a local lad'.

Hence, I have been lying about my marital status in order to avoid being pressured to accept a date, but also sometimes to protect my own safety in potentially dangerous situations. This can take the form of pretending to have to call my 'boyfriend' when a male informant starts to make me feel uneasy, or if I end up in a confined space with a

man, but it can also be deployed in less direct interactions. For example, in December 2022, while I was planning my next fieldwork session in Adana, I was discussing the details on WhatsApp with a male farm manager with whom I have been in contact for a few days. As we were scheduling a meeting the following week, he answered that he was 'very happy to meet with me' and added a 'kissing emoji'. I immediately felt uneasy, troubled by this emoji, and started questioning whether it was a sign of some ambiguity in the relationship. Later on, and even though no attempt at flirting had really been confirmed, I decided to cancel the appointment because I did not feel at ease going on my own. I made up a last-minute change of plans that meant I could not travel to Adana this time so that the informant would remain potentially available for another fieldwork session later on if I could, for instance, take a companion to go with me.

I had thought that, by performing gender norms, I would be able to make people forget my identity as a woman, which here, combined with my age and, to some extent the fact that I am a 'westerner', imposes almost compulsory discussions about my romantic situation: as I write several times in my field notebook, 'I can't escape the comments that I'll make a "good bride"' (23 May 2022, Izmir). I believed that, by lying about being in a relationship with a man, I could create a 'chastity belt' (Morton 1995) that would end the sexualization I was being exposed to in the field. However, ultimately, no matter how I perform my gender, this reality of sexism catches up with me. As a result, lying can never completely achieve its protective goal; lying about their love lives cannot enable female scholars to escape being women.

Lying about experiencing violence in the field: an act of self-censorship within the academic community

The continuum of gender-based violence leads female scholars to lie during fieldwork in order to avoid uncomfortable and risky situations, but they also lie within the academic community about the potential violence they have experienced during fieldwork. Female researchers lie to the academic community by concealing, i.e., not mentioning, episodes of sexist behaviour, sexual harassment or gender-based violence to which they may unfortunately have been exposed. While some female researchers, particularly feminist social scientists (Ross 2015; Cole 2017; Patarin-Jossec 2020; Moreno 1995; Schneider 2020), have made visible the continuum of violence perpetrated against women during fieldwork, this is still taboo in many scientific communities. Below, I look at the reasons why female researchers end up concealing these episodes, putting them in a position where they have to lie to the scientific community about the course of their fieldwork. My hypothesis is that these omissions stem from a form of self-censorship generated by the fear of seeing one's research work discredited.

I myself was the victim of sexual harassment during fieldwork in April 2022 in Adana: a man followed me on his scooter to a secluded area and masturbated while staring at me for several minutes until I could find a way to escape. The next day, still in shock about what had happened, I decided to cancel all my appointments on agricultural farms:

> Thursday 21st April 2022, Adana.
>
> I had an anxiety attack this morning at the thought that I was going to have to go out into the street and find myself surrounded by men. I had to go and collect my rental car (from a company run by men) and go to a farm (run by a man) to meet one of the agricultural engineers (a man). I didn't feel like I was ever going to be able to go alone into the field again. Something that I was doing with so much enthusiasm a few days before, aka conducting fieldwork by myself in agricultural areas, became like a huge wall I would never be able to surmount. I cancelled the whole thing. That was a wasted day. I feel extremely guilty. My financial resources are far from unlimited. I'm leaving in a few days and here I am cancelling my day in the field. Shame. And now I'm ashamed of myself for being ashamed of cancelling a day of fieldwork because I was sexually harassed by a man. How can I, a feminist, judge myself like that? (…)

Until the process of writing this article, I had not reread these lines since I wrote them in the spring of 2022. It took a lot of courage to mention this episode to other researchers, which I did only in the context of sufficiently trusting three feminist scholars who I believed would hear me without judging me or invalidating my experience. It took months before I felt confident enough to go into the field by myself again, and it took a lot of thinking before deciding to even mention this event in this paper. If I have done so, it is because I agree with the feminist imperative of sharing our experiences as female scholars so that we can collectively address the systemic problems we face, in order for feminist research to fulfil its transformative ambition. It is also because I am aware that I have been performing an act of self-censorship by not talking about it within the academic community: I was afraid that I might see my work discredited and that my ability to carry out fieldwork would be called into question by my colleagues, particularly those who decide on the allocation of research funding. I do not believe, however, that this lie of omission should be considered inappropriate or a breach of research ethics; it is a protective lie formulated intuitively after experiencing a traumatic situation and reveals a deep awareness of how female researchers, particularly at the start of their careers, can find their skills called into question.

Imperfect researcher: lies as a sign of the difficulties experienced while striving towards a feminist fieldwork methodology

In contrast to previously established fieldwork practices, feminist researchers have proposed a new way of doing research, giving it a transformative dimension by arguing that the researcher can participate in a form of social change both during the field study and the dissemination of the research results. However, achieving this transformative ideal of social science research is a highly individual process for the researcher, and depends on their fieldwork, their own positionality within the field and the difficulties they may encounter. This is largely due to the fact that there is no single 'feminist method' (Harding, 1987) that offers a guide to follow to the letter in order to carry out field research that can be called feminist. Therefore, researchers have often experienced difficulties, which are discussed in feminist studies circles, where recurring points of tension are addressed: for example, concerning the power relations between researcher and informants, particularly in the case of what some call 'studying down' configurations, which might be the case when a western researcher conducts research in the global South, or when there is a significant class difference between the informants and the researcher; which is doubly the case for me as a western researcher conducting fieldwork among seasonal agricultural workers in Turkey. In an effort to reflect upon my own fieldwork practices, I realized that the tension between the feminist ideal towards which I am striving and the difficulties inherent in my fieldwork configuration sometimes embodies as a lie. Therefore, this section seeks to contribute to ongoing reflections upon feminist research in the making by drawing on field situations in which I have intuitively lied to informants because I believe they translate the difficulties, and even perhaps the failures, that I encountered in trying to implement a feminist methodology.

> ### Trouble in the distance: lies as indicators of the difficulties in (not) reducing the distance between researcher and informants

One of the core contributions of feminist critiques of social science was to show that previous social scientists have conducted research from androcentric and colonial or orientalist perspectives (Ahmed, 1982; Hull *et al.*, 1982; Yegenoglu, 1998; Abu-Lughod, 2002; Mathieu, 2013). Not content to simply identify the limitations of previous research, feminist studies have reworked the categories of analysis that frame social science research practices (Collins, 1986). These include dichotomous notions that had long been taken for granted, among them public/private and inside/outside, which feminist scholars have analysed as social constructs that are often unsuited to the study of certain social contexts, particularly when they are non-European. As a result, with feminist studies questioning the relevance of these categories, anthropologists,

sociologists and ethnographers took a greater interest in the question of the researcher's exteriority to the field, which for a long time was considered a guarantee of objectivity. This brought into question the traditional methods of studying from the outside.

Drawing on this literature, I was keen not to limit my fieldwork to workplaces – which is the core of my research – but to study other areas of sociability frequented by agricultural workers outside the workplace: markets, schools, municipal squares, tea houses, transportation, festivals, fairs, etc. However, I realized that I was uneasy about agreeing to go to the homes of my informants when they offered. When they asked me to have dinner or spend the night at their place, I intuitively declined with a polite lie: by mentioning a friend I had arranged to meet up with, or a computer left at the hotel when I was teaching the next day. Although I am aware that staying with interviewees is practised by feminist sociologists – such as Alexandra Oeser, who explains that she stayed at a factory worker's house following her own break-up with her partner who was a member of the research team (Oeser, 2022) – I do not feel comfortable about accepting invitations from my informants. Some members of the academic community may have seen in my behaviour signs of a lack of 'decolonization' in my approach to the field, questioning my vision of intimacy, which would be biased and therefore not be the same as that of the informants. But it seems to me that the problem is much more practical and related to the conducting of the fieldwork itself.

If I intuitively chose to keep my distance by not entering the informants' homes, thereby contravening the feminist principles of moving towards proximity with informants and of not closing off any space for research, it was above all out of fear of the inherent complications that it might create in my fieldwork. These lies, which I use to maintain a distance from the informants, reflect my fear of being coopted in my fieldwork by certain informants who would have welcomed me into their homes for their own motives and to the detriment of others. I was afraid of skewing my fieldwork relationships by showing a closeness with certain workers to the detriment of others, or by arousing the mistrust of farm managers by staying with employees, or of workers by dining with 'the bosses'. Thus, I preferred to maintain a distance from all of them, or at least I chose not to deepen any of my relationships. This was motivated by the fear of seeing my fieldwork become more complicated to pursue, but it obviously closed off some areas to me: by preventing me from gaining access to certain spaces, by putting a limit on trust and confidence between myself and the informants, and sometimes even by disappointing some of the people I interviewed.

I also resorted to the same type of lie to maintain a distance from informants when the fieldwork relationship began to move towards friendship. The development of friendship in the context of research has been highlighted as an alternative to traditional fieldwork (Powdermaker, 1966), but in certain situations, which acted as a tipping

point from privileged fieldwork relationships to friendships, I decided to lie in order to maintain a certain distance. For example, I have used a made-up medical appointment as a pretext to decline an invitation to a wedding or a funeral. By doing this, I knew that I would potentially disappoint the person I was talking to and run the risk of affecting our fieldwork relationship, but I preferred to keep my distance.

When I looked more closely at my choices, I noticed that they reflected an uneasiness on my part: that of dreading the development of a friendship at a time when I believed that I was necessarily going to end up betraying my informants. As a number of anthropologists and sociologists have shown, leaving the field often involves a form of betrayal of the relationships that have developed during the research, whether is it by leaving behind the people who helped us, without having to give anything in return (Monsutti, 2007), by playing the 'double game' of the sociologist who 'builds on trust gained to betray it' (Pinçon and Pinçon-Charlot 1995, p.21) or by betraying the interests of the informants during the dissemination process (Abu-Lughod, 1989). This ethical unease that I feel can be explained by the 'tension between the duty of solidarity and the (founding) awareness that the position of scholar is a position of power' (Clair, 2016a, p.72). My lies therefore highlight the difficulty I experienced in negotiating the distance between myself and my informants, caught as I was between the ideals of feminist research on one hand, and my fears about misleading the informants or risking making friends whom I would one day have to betray on the other.

To let believe: reflections upon twisting the researcher's identity during fieldwork

As I was preparing the empirical material for this paper, I realized that most of the lies I have been telling during fieldwork are intuitive reactions to unanticipated situations. It appears that the main area in which I ended up bending the truth was while answering questions about my professional situation, probably because, as an early-career researcher, I was not sufficiently well prepared for what fieldwork is; i.e., a place for reciprocal social interaction.

As a result, I found myself frequently bewildered by the ways in which informants reacted to what they imagined my professional activity to be, and I found myself, rather than lying per se, having to juggle with their projections (Massicard 2002). Introducing myself as a French doctoral student elicited reactions that were sometimes diametrically opposed, and I coped with them with varying degrees of ease. These situations are tricky in the sense that they are beyond my control: my professional situation, combined with my identity, form part of a network of meanings that lead the interviewees to project certain preconceptions onto me that are more or less favourable, but which are often mistaken. And yet, despite noticing an informant's misunderstanding, on several

occasions I did not re-establish the truth about my situation, and even let them believe, in all conscience, what they wanted to believe about me. I noticed that the informants' projections of my professional situation, and therefore the very reason for my presence, varied according to a number of factors: certainly, according to their social class, or gender, but above all according to the way in which I was introduced to the field.

For example, during a visit to the Şanlıurfa agricultural fair in October 2022, where I was accompanied by a geographer from Harran University, we met a large number of senior officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, farm managers and heads of agri-food companies. I quickly realized the effect that the presence of the professor by my side was having as he is a well-known and respected local figure (he created an agricultural cooperative, directed award-winning documentaries about the region, and is often interviewed on local television), who introduced me as 'his colleague from France who works on agricultural issues in Turkey'. This combination of my alleged professional status, my proximity to an important local figure and my status as a European facilitated my access to interviews that I thought I would not otherwise have obtained due to my age and gender. Later, during the interviews, when an informant mentioned the Sorbonne University, assuming that is where I am doing my PhD, I did not correct him, even though I am studying elsewhere. Similarly, I did not specify that I do not hold a lecturing position at a French university, even though one informant referred to my alleged students. In this case, the fact that I did not re-establish the truth, that I took advantage of the suppositions generated by the fact that I was introduced by a professor as his peer, allowed me to benefit from a form of prestige that opened the way to interviews with senior civil servants and company directors. Lying by permitting a form of fuzziness to remain around my professional situation was therefore an intuitive choice made with the aim of gaining access to data, a choice that can be questioned from a feminist ethics point of view.

Lies as a methodological resource for conducting fieldwork

As well as revealing the difficulties encountered by the researcher – whether when confronted with gender-based violence, or due to tensions between the research ideal and practices – lying in the field can also be seen as a methodological resource that the researcher intuitively happens to use in order to carry out their research. Obviously, lying is not a methodology in itself that can be used at the whim of the fieldworker: it remains an intuitive practice that the researcher uses on the spur of the moment, without necessarily having anticipated it or being fully aware of it. By analysing my own fieldwork practices and the times when I lied to my informants, I noticed that sometimes lying was a way for me to get around situations that might compromise the

fieldwork, or conversely to create situations that would be favourable to the research. So, rather than stigmatizing lying a posteriori, it seems interesting to observe it as a form of methodological resource that the researcher uses in the process of evolving in complex social situations.

Hiding your true self: dissimulating the researcher's opinions while facing hate speech

I work in agricultural areas of Turkey in the context of intensifying social tensions around ethnic and migration issues, which means that I am often exposed to more or less explicit hate speech against ethnic and religious minorities during my interviews. This can range from racist comments during a random conversation, to overt hate speech in the context of an interview about the employment of foreign workers, and it mainly targets Syrian refugees (Benek and Baydemir 2019; Bélanger and Saracoglu 2019). Even though they display different degrees of racism against Syrians, these frequent situations have in common that, as a researcher, I instinctively chose to remain silent in the face of racist comments in order to maintain an 'illusion of sympathy' (Ybema *et al.*, 2009) with my informants; I am therefore lying about my real opinions. The following examples display two situations in which I disguised my disagreement with the informants after they had formulated hate speech targeting mostly Syrians workers:

Wednesday 12th October 2022, Şanlıurfa.

Abstract of an interview with Kibar[1], a social worker based in Şanlıurfa and Viranşehir, managing a team that develops access to education for Syrian women and children.

We are sitting with Kibar at a tea house on a square in the centre of Şanlıurfa; some kids are yelling while playing and it interrupts the flow of the conversation.

(…) Marine: This square is very busy!

Kibar: The Syrians settle in this square every evening: it's known to be their place in Şanlıurfa. As you can see, they're very noisy and behave badly, a lot of neighbours are complaining. Syrians and the people of Urfa really do have different cultures. Syrians hang around the square for hours, doing nothing but disturbing the people who live here. In fact, a lot of people have moved away because of the nuisance. They talk loudly, they even shout. And they let their children do whatever they want. It's not easy to see how we can live together when there's such a cultural difference. (…)

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[1] All names have been changed in accordance with the principle of anonymization.

Monday 23rd May 2022, Izmir.

Abstract from an interview with a farm manager:

(…) Marine: Do you employ foreign seasonal workers?

Ahmet: I don't hire foreigners. I can't trust them. Some others [farmers] do it because it's cheaper, but I don't want the work to be done badly.

Marine: What do you mean by 'the work would be done badly'?

Ahmet: Syrians don't know how to work. They're physically strong but they're also very lazy. If you're lazy, what's the point of being strong, right? You have to be behind them all the time, watching them, controlling them. Otherwise, they just sit in a corner and do the bare minimum. They're like that by nature. You know, Arabs have a different culture. That's why I don't hire foreigners. (…)

In both of these situations, and despite my personal beliefs clashing with what was being said, I did not interrupt the conversation to confront the informants. By remaining silent and not objecting to what was being said, I did not behave in the same way as I would have done if I had heard these comments outside the research context. However, what some might consider to be an 'objective silence' to adopt during fieldwork clashes with the feminist ideal that I hope to pursue of conducting transformative research. In these situations, not picking up on the comment, not dwelling on it, could be perceived as a silence of collusion that contributes to the trivialization of hate speech and racist stereotypes. Indeed, while faced with the expression of racist discourse, not only did I remain silent, I also made the intuitive choice of 'camouflaging my disdain' and maintaining an 'illusion of sympathy' (Ybema et al., 2009). That being said, it seems to me that this is more of a lie by dissimulation than a silence of collusion, and that this lie is essential to the pursuit of the research. Without it, most of my relations with the informants would be in perpetual tension and I would be unable to conduct my research. Therefore, I believe that this type of lie can be analysed as a methodological lie: by not reacting to the racist comments to which I am exposed and concealing my opinions, I choose to lie about my identity outside the context of the fieldwork for the purpose of being able to continue the research.

Prolific lies: methodological amplification of the truth about the researcher

Just because the researcher can conceal certain aspects of their beliefs does not mean that they can become a 'fly on the wall' to observe social situations without interfering. In fact, one of the contributions of feminist epistemology is the observation that the

researcher is never an outsider to the field and that their presence necessarily influences social life. In the case of my research, my presence has undoubtedly generated discussion on various topics: very often, informants are interested in my background and the reasons for me coming to rural areas of Turkey.

If, at first, I was avoiding these questions by saying that being there was just part of my studies, I eventually started being more open with the informants about my situation by explaining why I went to Turkey in the first place. I also started elaborating on how I chose my research topic in relation to my deep interest in agriculture as my family was also involved in agricultural labour, and this eventually led to a new kind of discussion with the informants. As I gained experience of doing fieldwork and got used to being asked this question, I gradually started emphasizing the fact that my family also farms in France, and that this is why I am interested in agricultural labour. This progressively turned into a lie of exaggeration as I ended up over-emphasizing my link with agricultural labour, even though in reality my family's farming activity goes back to my grandparents' and great-grandparents' generations. I realized that this lie of exaggeration would eventually create some space for discussions that would be relevant to the analysis and start developing it more. It is a lie of exaggeration in the sense that I do not make a living from farming at all, as my interviewees do, and that it does not play as large a part in my life or that of my family as I suggest. And yet, I believe there is a methodological interest that justifies this twisting of reality. In this sense, I agree with French sociologist Isabelle Clair, who states that 'lying about the real subject of the research, about one's identity outside the fieldwork, observing people beyond what they can imagine are also intended to constitute solid material on which to base the analysis, in this case feminist, that will be made afterwards' (Clair 2016a, p.77).

Soon afterwards, I started showing my informants pictures of my grandparents and great-grandparents on their farms to help spark discussions during group interviews about tools, clothing or women's and migrants' labour: all subjects that are at the core of my research interest. Showing pictures of my family, just like talking about agriculture in France, acts as a tool for comparison and enables discussions that extend beyond the frame set by structured interviews. For instance, one of the pictures I choose to show to female workers is a snapshot taken in the 1950s of my grandmother Monique driving a tractor. It generally sparks discussions that say more about the sexual division of labour than when I asked directly why men and women do not work together. In directed interviews, most of the time I received the reply: 'that's just the way it is', or: 'God wouldn't accept it', but, when looking at my grandmother's picture, female workers start discussing together, without me guiding the discussion, the fact that she is 'a lady driving a tractor', which in their experience is strictly reserved for men. In this sense, whether the lies told by the researcher conceal or amplify an aspect

of their identity, they can be a relevant tool for the fieldwork from the moment they are told with the aim, not of harming, but of constituting solid empirical material for the analysis.

Figure 1 Picture of Monique Ledroit taken in the 1950s (personal archives). Often shown to female agricultural workers during group interviews.

Conclusion

This article has shown that studying the researcher's lies is a fruitful reflexive exercise for understanding qualitative research practices in the social sciences. Rather than rendering lying a taboo subject that should not be discussed for fear of legitimizing it, this article considers lying as socially situated and analyses it as revealing the complex dynamics inherent in fieldwork.

Initially, it was argued that lying can be a necessary means of protection for female scholars when facing gender-based violence in the field. The article identified a paradox in that lying can be feminist when it protects against sexist behaviour and sexual violence in the field and against the symbolic violence that the revelation of these events to the scientific community can entail, but at the same time lying contravenes the feminist principle of valuing the need to speak out on issues of exposure to gender-based violence in research. From an epistemological point of view, this situation reveals a paradox between, on the one hand, the feminist imperative to speak out and, on the

other, the protective function of lying for female scholars. Consequently, a feminist perspective on lying would consist of recognizing the polysemic aspect of lying that can, at times, enable researchers to protect themselves from sexist behaviour and sexual violence in the field and from its revelation to the scientific community, whereas the revelation of lying is situational.

Secondly, it was seen that lying can be symptomatic of a situation of discomfort on the part of the researcher, revealing the dilemmas that sometimes arise in the field. Lies were considered as being the site of tension between fieldwork in theory and empirical practices. It has been shown that lying can be a reflex on the part of the researcher to create emotional distance from the survey and the informants, just as much as it can be a sign of discomfort in certain situations generated by the fieldwork. The study of lying should therefore, via a reflexive effort, enable the researcher to reflect upon certain sticking points that may arise during the fieldwork, in order to examine them with the aim, if not of resolving them, then of viewing them objectively. In this sense, producing a reflexive analysis of lying, as of any other fieldwork practice, contributes to reflections upon qualitative research methods.

Finally, it has been shown that the researcher's lies may be intuitive reactions to complex situations requiring the researcher to adapt in order to maintain or stimulate the fieldwork relationship. In this case, the lie becomes a methodological resource that helps the fieldwork to run smoothly. Lying can take many forms and is one of the researcher's spontaneous resources when faced with situations of possible impasse: it can, as we have seen, take the form of concealing the researcher's convictions, or amplifying an aspect of their identity in order to provoke discussion.

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Regnbågsflaggan på Kårhuset (by Camilla Lekbjer)

LGBTQ+ safe spaces: Spatial claims of LGBTQAIPN+ people in the city of São Paulo, Brazil

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Abstract

This study aims to explore how LGBTQAIPN+ people negotiate space in the city of São Paulo, Brazil. Brazilian cities are ambivalent places for LGBTQAIPN+ people: communities are founded and cultivated in an environment where violence is embedded in public spaces. Institutional spaces that provide essential services in healthcare (hospitals), education (schools, universities) and workplaces are or can be places of potential discrimination and violence. For several years now, Brazil has been reported as the country with the most significant number of homicides of trans people (TGEU, 2016, 2021, 2022). Simultaneously, over the last few years, many LGBTQ+ organizations and informal groups have been developing in the social structure of the city of São Paulo: from LGBTQ+ shelters to informal sports teams playing in tournaments for trans and queer people, from queer groups of musicians for the Carnival to educational projects about the history and culture of the LGBTQ+ movement. The primary research inquiry of this study is to understand how LGBTQAIPN+ communities build safe spaces and care practices in the city in response to violence in public spaces. What are the good practices they create and the main challenges they face inside these spaces and in the surrounding context? The methodological approach consists of an ethnographic study conducted using participant observation in one of São Paulo's LGBTQ+ organizations. The fieldwork was undertaken between December 2022 and March 2023 as part of my master's thesis study. The organization Casa Um provides different services for the population of the neighbourhood of Bixiga, in the centre of São Paulo, prioritizing the most vulnerable among the LGBTQAIPN+ population. Different support services are offered to counteract social marginalization; indeed, these services are often unavailable or unwelcoming in the public realm for LGBTQAIPN+ people. This creates places of

community, education, security and shelter, and produces new spaces of co-habitation, shared experiences and practical applications of political and activist concepts. I argue, however, that in these spaces the concept of safety is challenged by the intersection of different identities among the people who inhabit them. These identities bring forward, in particular, the different lived experiences encountered by racialized and gendered bodies. By analysing discourses and practices of safe space-making processes by volunteers and workers for the association and the population of those spaces, I argue that the entanglement of identities presents opportunities to understand and manifest sexual citizenship and gendered bodies in public spaces from an intersectional perspective. Introducing this dimension into the analysis, by encouraging the inclusion of race, gender identity, sexual orientation, class and other aspects of identity, becomes essential and unavoidable in the development and political construction of inclusive safe spaces.

Keywords: safe spaces, intersectionality, geographies of sexualities, queer geographies, space.

Introduction

Brazil is not the easiest country to live as an LGBTQAIPN+ person. For several years now, it has been reported as the country with the most significant number of homicides of trans people (TGEU, 2016, 2021, 2022). While there are laws that support primary LGBTQ+ rights and help the fight against discrimination, many of these legal frameworks are absent at the federal level, therefore it is not guaranteed that local or central government will implement such practices of inclusion. After the election of Jair Bolsonaro in 2018 and the establishment of his government in 2019, the situation for human rights in Brazil reached a low point. As in many other countries, where over the last few decades women's and LGBTQ+ rights have generally seen an improvement, these movements have been rapidly followed by backlashes pushed by extreme-right parties, religious movements and social movements that seek to preserve the status quo. These backlashes resulted in pressure on policies that include access to abortion, educational programmes against hate speech on LGBTQ+ issues and sex education for minors.

Bolsonaro's government supported a national orientation in domestic and foreign policies, traditional cultural and religious values on many contemporary social questions and a strong authoritarian figure in the image presented by Bolsonaro himself, enhanced by direct connections with the military and private security forces. In Brazil, these backlash policies were included in the political agenda of the Bolsonarist

government, together with a general intolerance of social, racial and cultural differences. Actions taken by political and social activists on the conservative side were particularly fervent in cases that included discussions on younger generations, children, teenagers and educational institutions. This encompassed the inclusion of these topics in school programmes or policies to further the inclusion of the LGBTQ+ population in society (in the workplace, in access to education and healthcare, in their rights to build a family). The fight against 'gender ideology' became transformed into a defence of the rights of children, in a cultural educational system that presented and defended a view of gender based on religion (Christian, and especially Evangelical) and the traditional division of gender roles in society.

The coalition that supported Bolsonaro's victory had a name that could well be a possible motto for his political orientation in these areas: *Brasil Acima de tudo, Deus acima de Todos* (Brazil Above Everything, God Above Everyone). This sentence perfectly summarizes the political orientation of Bolsonaro on most of these topics: a nationalistic defence of the country's traditions that privileged a narrative based on white European descendant as making people more suitable to serve as the political elite of the country than other ethnic groups, and the confinement of women to a role more compatible with private life and care of the family. The family itself was considered to be central to the social construction of society and was defined exclusively by its heteronormative definition of a father, mother and their offspring. These affirmations were strongly supported by a ruling of societal equilibrium founded on religious pillars. In 2011, the Ministry of Education, pressured by religious groups, suspended anti-homophobia educational programmes. In 2014, Congress erased the words 'gender equality' from the National Education Plan.

During the political campaigns for the 2018 national elections, Bolsonaro formed strong alliances with conservative religious groups and the fight against 'gender ideology' became one of the core emotional triggers for his followers (Gregis Estivalet and Dvoskin, 2021). The widespread use of social media platforms (in particular private groups) became the easiest and most effective way to spread his political propaganda, including deliberately constructed fake news targeting the LGBTQ+ population that would have struggled to pass the checks of the more traditional and strongly regulated media (television and print). Gender-related topics were creating strong emotional reactions that were difficult to counteract with rational narratives: fabricated false accusations about sex education programmes that encouraged early sexual initiation in children, homosexuality and paedophilia, generating confusion about gender identity, were difficult to deconstruct once they became viral (Araújo Dos Passos and Bortolini, 2022). A particular case involved a video in which erotic baby-bottles (*mamadeiras eroticas*) were said to be being distributed by the PT government

(*Partido dos trabalhadores*, Workers party) inside schools (Gregis Estivalet and Dvoskin, 2021). Bolsonaro claimed that the educational materials provided by the Minister of Education of the PT government and other NGOs on these topics, called the 'gay kit' by conservative politicians, were aimed at incentivizing homosexuality and promiscuity from a young age. This fuelled emotional reactions in his followers by directing a politics of disgust towards the LGBTQ+ population. During the election campaign, Bolsonaro frequently appeared on television with a book that was allegedly used to teach sex to children, claiming that this book was written by the government and used in educational programmes in schools. Therefore, while LGBTQ+ rights have been improving in recent decades in Brazil, since Bolsonaro's campaign for the 2018 elections, Brazil has become more unsafe for the LGBTQ+ population due to the current political and social climate and the spread of public declarations against LGBTQ+ people from politicians and from public and religious figures. After the 2018 elections, these practices became magnified and attacks on the LGBTQ+ population were legitimized by Bolsonaro's election (Gregis Estivalet and Dvoskin, 2021).

In 2018, Bolsonaro renamed the Ministry of Human Rights as the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights (*Ministério da Mulher, da Família e dos Direitos Humanos*), putting at its centre the role of women in strict heteronormative gender roles and the traditional family. This would not mean much if not for the fact that the Minister appointed by Bolsonaro was Damares Alves, a lawyer and evangelical pastor known for her strong religious opinions on most of the topics mentioned above. During her swearing-in speech, Alves stated that central to the Ministry's activity would be the stopping of 'ideological indoctrination' of young Brazilians on topics related to gender ('One of the challenges will be to end the abuse of ideological indoctrination. The ideological indoctrination of children and teenagers in Brazil is over'; Phillips, 2018) and emphasized her religious belief in her political practice ('The State is secular, but this minister is extremely Christian, and because of that, she believes in God's design'; Phillips, 2018). These allegations, per se, do not necessary need to be followed by a specific anti-gender political crusade, but they were in fact backed up by many political actions from Bolsonaro and his government that shifted in this direction. The main characteristics of *Bolsonarismo* are illustrated by many of the examples provided above: an anti-establishment narrative directed against traditional political figures and mainstream media and journalism that presents him as the pillar of the traditional family and a core supporter of most conservative religious values. Gender in the far-right Brazilian narrative assumes a dichotomous division of 'us' versus 'them', which feeds on moral controversies, many related to gender equality, the role of women as family carers, and LGBTQ+ rights.

The city of São Paulo is the most populous in Latin America. It is considered the financial and economic capital of Brazil, and offers an incredibly wide range of cultural activities from all over the country, the continent and the world. In the *Rua Augusta*, at one corner of the city's financial district, queer social life takes place among shops, bars and discos. Traditionally, this is where the LGBTQ+ population of São Paulo met to express their identity more freely, similarly to many other gay districts of international cities on a global scale. But gayness and queerness are not just confined to this street. Many gay, lesbian and queer bars have sprung up in other neighbourhoods of the city, each with their own characteristics and matching the social life of their neighbourhood. While these spaces are visible and appear to be accessible to all, many are selective, elitist and exclusive. Access to many of these spaces require an economic status that makes them inaccessible to the poorer, the homeless or those who have unstable job conditions or are economically dependent on other people (like the youngest). In many places, whiteness is the norm, especially among cultural elites, and this is a recurring pattern, even in various specific queer places, making the presence of racialized people an unusual event or unwelcome. By contrast, other queer social and artistic spaces are often filled with people of non-binary and gender-non-conforming identities, who are questioning the norms even inside the LGBTQ+ community, and who push for different issues in the community agenda. This can raise tensions among the different generations and groups within the community. Therefore, the social life of queer people who live in the same city is fragmented, and made up of opposing and contradictory experiences.

In this context, it is clear to see why many LGBTQ+ social movements have emerged in recent years at a local level as a response to the dangers posed by the extreme-right government. One of these is an association called Casa Um, which was founded just before the elections of 2018 when the rise of the extreme right was clearly evident, and the climate was tense and dangerous for the defence of human rights. At the core of Casa Um's activities were different objectives: providing services that the government had interrupted or cancelled for the most vulnerable among the LGBTQ+ population, providing an alternative source of information about the discriminatory policies of the government, igniting a spark of resistance, and building a place of care and shelter against the rising violence, discrimination and abuse faced by the entire LGBTQ+ population.

In December 2018, just a couple of weeks before Bolsonaro's government took office, 40 LGBTQ+ couples got married in the *Galpão* of Casa Um in the first collective equal marriage in the city. The event included several couples who had decided to respond to the association's call and brought their weddings forward to create a communitarian act of resistance against the LGBTQ-phobic attitudes of the soon-to-be president of

Brazil. The event appeared in most of the Brazilian media and attracted international coverage, being featured in *The New York Times* in the US and in newspapers in Spain, Portugal, the UK and Italy. The fear was that, with the establishment of the new government, it could become more difficult, if not impossible, to be recognized as couples. In fact, there was no law that guaranteed equal marriage for homosexual couples. Before 2011 it was not possible, then a sentence from the Supreme Federal Tribunal (*Supremo Tribunal Federal*) made it possible for the first time. Since then, the right to equal marriage in Brazil has existed in a limbo of power between the justice system and the executive power of the country. This is one of many events that occurred and had resonance and importance at both local and federal level. Casa Um is now collaborating with various other organizations, local and international, to support and care of the LGBTQ+ population.

Given the political situation outlined above, it becomes essential to understand how LGBTQAIPN+ people negotiate space in the city of São Paulo, and the role that associations such as Casa Um may play in this. Studying the practices of care and the building and organization of such spaces can make it possible to understand and implement more strategies in other services and to make services more inclusive and effective.

Methodology

The study involved a fieldwork period of about three months of participatory observation, which was undertaken between December 2022 and March 2023 as part of my master's thesis study. I entered the association Casa Um, where I was able to participate as a volunteer in the activities, while being transparent about my intention to research the association's spaces, for which I asked permission. This strategy allowed me to participate completely in the life of the association and to experience the spaces where the activities were taking place. During the fieldwork, I had the opportunity to be one of the volunteers in daily activities and to attend events and some open classes of the courses organized by the association. This dual position allowed me to change my perspective and the perception that other people had of me in the space on various occasions. During the fieldwork, I had a number of conversations with other volunteers, workers in different fields, users and former beneficiaries, and participants at the events. Each one provided testimonies on their experiences in this space and in other spaces around the city and told stories about the association. These long, informal, daily conversations may be equivalent, from the perspective of depth of knowledge, to in-depth interviews conducted over a long period of time; as increasing

intimacy developed between me and other people, I connected to the association and the people who are part of it, and I was entrusted with insights and confessions, some of which people asked me not to disclose in my study. I intend to keep these promises.

Ethically, many pressing questions arose. As a white European university student, I was privileged in many ways in comparison to those I encountered. On the other hand, we had similar experiences of growing up as queer people in conservative or unwelcoming environments, and more generally in a heteronormative society that does not allow space for our identities and tries in many ways to obstruct our lives. The decision I took when developing my methodology was that of not conducting interviews with the residents and users of the house. This was also in agreement with the organization's policy, to maintain its commitment to protect the most vulnerable and not put them in a situation that might reproduce the institutionalized practices they had already been through. Instead, I participated in the organization's daily life and heard people's stories with their consent. Mostly, I tried to help with the organization of events and other kinds of logistic support (cleaning, organizing the storage, putting up posters and information sheets), and by giving out donations and materials to the users. In this way, each day I was able to experience new encounters with the people passing through the organization's spaces and maintain conversations about their experiences with them over time.

One of the most widely debated issues in ethnographic research is that of distancing ourselves as researchers from the people in our study due to the need for objectivity. This almost appears to be a 'commonly accepted rule' in the social sciences that clashes with the relationships we develop during our fieldwork, especially when our theoretical methodological paradigms are aligned with feminist and decolonial visions. This clash of perspectives about positionality led me to develop more reflections during my fieldwork about what we mean when talking about positionality and our effects on the people we work with. This allowed me to constantly rethink what was a good strategy at a particular moment, which words to choose and what to tell people about myself. This is far from the idea of the complete objectivity of the sciences; since people in our research are telling us about themselves, we should be honest in answering their questions, as far as we feel comfortable. The idea that a personal bond could obstruct our objectivity and our work is still part of the extractivist approach that defined the social sciences for many decades and does not take into consideration the collaboration we can create as social researchers with the people who are considered 'subjects' and 'objects' of our research.

Another important part of my methodology was the use of visual methods during the fieldwork. Alongside my notes, I took photographs in the association's spaces during the activities. Clearly, this presents a potentially important obstacle to the attempt to

conduct research in a non-invasive way. Images, especially photographs, are a different modality for expressing information. They are intrinsically intrusive, and present a piece of reality that, despite the best efforts of the photographer, may easily be interpreted and/or misinterpreted. For this and other reasons, they need to be anticipated and executed with adequate precautions, in the sense of forethought. Therefore, to respond to this need to maintain a sense of safe space within the association, I developed some 'safety measures' in my use of visual methods.

Being visible may seem like a paradox, since the photographer's lens may feel like a weapon. But what disrupts the sense of safety most in terms of being the subject of a photograph is the sudden realization that we are being photographed in a furtive and disguised way. Being visible is, therefore, a way to make others feel safer, because we show ourselves as the centre of attention.

Another important point is maintaining the anonymity of the people in our pictures, especially if we do not have explicit consent to portray them. People may remain nameless and still be represented in a trustworthy and honourable way. We do this when presenting interview scripts with only the initial letter of the name of the person who has been interviewed. We can do the same by choosing pictures where faces are hidden or cut out of the picture. Thirdly, we can rethink the ways in which we narrate, and how we use storytelling and images for our research process. Images and photos do not necessarily have to be descriptive if we attach descriptions to them that are compelling and complete to describe the moment. We do not need to share the full image of a person dancing; we just need to take a picture of their feet. In the photographs that I decided to use in my analyses and share in this paper, I have cut out, blurred, or darkened faces. When taking these pictures, I have often focused on details, rather that the whole space.

Analysis

The association Casa Um is an organization that provides support to vulnerable LGBTQ+ populations and other people in the neighbourhood. It is located in Bixiga, a neighbourhood in the centre of São Paulo, where many homeless people live, and not too far from what is known as '*Cracolandia*' (the land of Crack), an area in the oldest part of the city where many people use drugs, with a high presence of sex workers and homeless people. A five minutes' walk in the area will bring one to the association's three buildings: the *Galpão* (shed), the *Clinica Social* (Social Clinic) and the third building, which is divided into *Republica* (a refuge house) and *Biblioteca Comunitaria*, a communitarian library.

The *Galpão* is the main space for cultural and public activities, and is an addition to the original spaces. Originally, social activities were conducted in the library, which was very limited, and many events ended up occupying the adjacent pedestrian part of the street. The communitarian library continues to be a social space for the neighbourhood, where there are smaller social events and children and young people often come to borrow books or read during the day. The main events are organized in the *Galpão*: the structure and organization of this building is very adaptable to different situations, being able to change depending on the kind of events taking place (De Souza and Cymbalista, 2020). During the day, the central area is a coworking space for the association's various teams, while at the same time some areas are reserved for the two social workers to meet users, while other rooms are booked in specific times-slots for professional courses or other programmed activities. The communitarian kitchen that is part of the *Galpão* is also used for courses and to store food donations for the users, the residents of the refuge house or other associations. In the evenings, the main room is transformed: the wide tables which, during the day, are covered with computers and office supplies are taken down, and instead we can have lines of chairs facing a stage positioned at the end of the room for drag shows and presentations; or an open space for movement workshops, creating a ballroom for voguing or yoga classes. During these events, the kitchen can become a bar for preparing cocktails or food for the events. The outside area between the building and the gate is often used during the day for organizing donations; by night it becomes a place for chatting, drinking, dancing, sambaing, for bands to play their music and artists to display their artwork. During the biggest events, people also occupy the residential street in front of the building, but a shared and generally known policy ensures that all events end at 10 pm, so as not to disturb the neighbourhood.

Many of the people who live in the street participate in these activities, from making donations and helping with small tasks, to participating more actively in courses and events. Many people participated in one of the fundraising events, drag bingo (bingo in which the presenters are drag performers), to support the association. These were mainly white gay and queer men, in their 30s or older, but also many of the association's volunteers, friends and neighbours. One of the neighbours, Dona V, an old lady in her 80s, won the main bingo prize. The crowd started cheering and chanting her name, because she was already well known. The drag queens called her to come and collect the prize on stage and asked her to do a little dance with them. Everyone in the room was cheering her, and even the people working in the kitchen came out to clap and sing her name.

During the same event, a young boy took the microphone and started talking to the crowd about a traditional TV show he is passionate about. I met this boy several times,

he comes to the association almost every afternoon because he lives nearby, and he has been coming since the association was set up. The crowd welcomed his speech and talked to him generally in a friendly way.

Figures 1-2: Photos from the Drag Bingo Fundraising Event, taken by the author during the fieldwork.

The *Galpão* is the building where most public activities take place because it has the capacity to become a shed during times of large donations, a theatre (as it was in the past before the association settled in), a co-working space, a gym, and a room for birthday parties and Christmas dinners. This ability to transform its spaces is essential for a small organization that provides a wide variety of services to the LGBTQ+ population, especially the most vulnerable (minors, the homeless, victims of abuse, the unemployed, migrants and refugees).

While waiting for their appointments with social workers, users sit in the same room where other people from the association are working on their computers. They are welcomed and accommodated, offered coffee and water. They chat, and sometimes they already start talking about their problems to other members of the association, sometimes trying to receive more donations or some other kind of practical help, at other times just telling their story to someone who will listen. This personal experience is very common, and many people have reported it to me.

Figures 3-4-5-6: Photos from the Graduation Event of professional courses for Trans Women and Travesti, taken by the author during the fieldwork.

During my first week of fieldwork, I was involved in the preparations for another event, the graduation of students who had taken part in the professional courses organized by the association. It was a special event organized to celebrate the Trans women and Travesti who had completed their professional courses in cookery, hairdressing and make-up skills, which the organization had designed specifically for them. This time, the event was not open to the public, but the intention was to maintain a closed space for the students being celebrated along with their friends, families and partners. This was essential because the focus of the event was not the organization itself or the wider community, but the Trans and Travesti students and their need to have a celebratory event that most of them did not have in their lives, or could not experience safely. During the event, the older of the two social workers at the association, who is often addressed as 'mum' by the users in an amicable and familiar way, explained this to me.

'How do you feel at these events?' I asked her. She replied: 'I'm very happy for them, I'm moved to see how much fun they're having and to experience them celebrating so freely.' She continued:

> You see, for many of them, even in their 40s or 50s, this is the first time in their life they have a space to bring a partner or a family member who celebrates them openly as the person they are. They express themselves freely as the person they are. They prepare as elegantly as if they were going to a wedding or to the most beautiful theatre. Doing their

hair, with the most beautiful dresses, in high heels and coming by car, by Uber. It's their moment, they are the star. I'm so proud of them, almost as if they were my kids.

It often occurred that, when walking along the streets in the centre of São Paulo, I would encounter people who would ask me for things: food, money or other kinds of help. This is a situation that almost every person living in a city has encountered and has probably had contrasting feelings about what to do. Should I give them something? I can't give to all of them, otherwise I'll compromise myself. During this fieldwork experience, I felt differently because some of them were people I recognised from the donations we made at the *Galpão*, and I could tell others about the services provided by the organization. When I told them about Casa Um, some already knew it and shared their experience with me.

Their reactions were really varied. One time, near the *Rua Augusta*, a man came close to me, saying: 'Hi darling, no don't worry, I'm not trying to steal from you. I'm an LGBT person. I see there's a lot of support here, but I'm in a very vulnerable position. Could you help me with a small offer?' I thought that describing the organization was going to be very helpful for him, but his answer was unexpected. 'What? I know that association; I've been there in the past and they treated me very badly! I would never go back there!' When telling me about his experience, he described the person who welcomed him, and I recognized him to be one of the founders. In the past, the association was not structured in the same way, there were no social workers, and their job was done by people who were not professionally trained in this area, because the organization was born through crowdfunding. Today, the organization's structure is different, there are many teams in different working areas that collaborate with each other, but while the decision-making process appears to be more horizontal, with general meetings to discuss the different issues where cleaners and cooks are included, the 'decision-making' moments still follow the lead of the director, eliminating the democratic process of involving various teams in any decisions that would change their way of working. This has influenced, for example, how people are welcomed to the association, what kind of help they can receive and what rules they have to follow.

As this is a preliminary analysis that has been conducted based on my ethnographic notes, important comparisons are still missing to connect the different experiences and stories of the people I encountered in this space.

Conclusion

The situation narrated so far describes the spaces run by the organization Casa Um and some of the practices that the association's workers have developed over the last few years to create a safe space for the LGBTQAIPN+ people who use their services. I must underline again that this analysis is still a work in progress and this paper presents only preliminary conclusions. Despite this, some conclusions can still be drawn about the use of the space, and about the experiences of the different people who pass through this space and are part of it.

Firstly, the buildings, especially the *Galpão*, are integrated into the neighbourhood in a fluent and balanced way. People who live in the nearby streets come to the events even when they are designed specifically for the LGBTQ+ community: kids, young people, elders, families. This network of people forming connections responds to the missing family and kinship relations that often occurs at specific moments in the lives of LGBTQ+ people. In particular, the most vulnerable, the ones who have been expelled from their houses and families, who don't have a support network behind them, find in this space the families and networks they are missing, together with a home that can host them at a time when they are most fragile: emotionally, physically and financially.

At the same time, when the organization perceived that its attempts to include the population of the neighbourhood and to involve them were working, the kinds of activities that were arranged for these specific population segments grew: including workshops for elders about health and providing specific benefits, organizing workshops about body movement and games with kids and teenagers, and professional courses that are open not only to LGBTQ+ people, and other open cultural events.

Criticisms have also been made about the work of the organization, and they come both from inside and outside. One of the main questions that emerges repeatedly is the lack of attention to different life experiences. While the association's workers are people of different races and gender identities, most of the power positions are occupied by white and cisgender people, and those with more decision-making power are held by white men. At the same time, in the practices of the association, great attention is given to including care-taking practices that consider highly intersectional approaches. Despite this, not all the workers consider using these approaches, or are able to. Intersectional practices often clash with the old established practices that are easier to implement, and these often emerge in emergency situations.

It should also be borne in mind that an intersectional perspective is not always compatible when designing services and deciding the allocation of resources. The application of this perspective fades when, facing a decision about who is to get an

available bed in the house for the next month, it is necessary to create a list that defines the most vulnerable and potentially the most in danger among the help seekers. In an ideal situation, there would be funds for every one of the users to cover their needs, but this is not possible because the organization is financed by donations. The solution is to consider who among the people in need of a home has more opportunities to find the same shelter in other places, or to get help from other associations and people. It may become a risk analysis evaluation based on survival skills and assets. Simultaneously, collaboration with other organizations is often what enables the allocation of resources and help to the largest possible number of people seeking the services of the association.

Despite these limitations, the organization provides better and more complete support to its users than the public services, including the personal attention that is so often lost in the social services of a city. Within this personalized attention, we find the capacity that the association's volunteers and workers have to spend time to create and invest in relationships with the users, learning their life-story, accepting their struggles with empathy and developing personalized services on the spot, to respond to personalized needs.

Finally, it is important to recognize the role of aggregation for the LGBTQ+ population. This involves offering free cultural and social events and supporting the municipality and other institutions and organizations to make their events more inclusive. This is fundamental for a community for whom places for encounters, association and relations are often endangered by the pressure of the more traditional and conservative segment of society. In these spaces, political actions are built, needs and struggles are being listened to, and new alternatives arise from the daily practices of these organizations.

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Sex (and gender) assignment at birth in Europe: Which issues and perspectives?

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Abstract

This paper draws upon my doctoral research exploring the complex relationship between intersex people and the law. Intersex people are born with sexual characteristics (primary and secondary) that do not fit the typical definition of male or female. Nowadays, instances of intersex are receiving increasing attention at both the international and European levels (e.g., Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, 2017, Resolution 2119, and European Parliament, 2019). However, there is no adequate legal framework – international, European or national – that recognizes and protects intersex people. In attempting to untangle the knot of this complex relationship, one of the first issues to address is undoubtedly the question of sex/gender assignment at birth. This practice is widespread throughout Europe, even though there are no international constraints to which states must adhere. In most European states, sex/gender assignment is binary, achieved by a simple visual examination, and the resulting sex/gender registration must be made within a short time after birth. This procedure, which is particularly harmful to intersex babies – upon whom genital mutilation is performed to "normalize" their sexual characteristics – is, in fact, harmful and problematic for society as a whole. Indeed, it presupposes that the sex assigned at birth is the same as the person's gender identity and thus it is highly likely to be harmful to trans people as well, especially in countries where legal gender recognition is lengthy and costly (e.g., Italy). Given the scenario described above, this paper outlines the key issues related to sex/gender assignment at birth. "*Best practices*" currently adopted by some European countries are also presented. Furthermore, this paper attempts to imagine the consequences of eliminating sex/gender as a public element of one's identity, as is already done with other data – e.g., sexual orientation or religion – which are now considered sensitive data. Methodologically, this research draws upon a feminist perspective that aims to privilege the principle of self-determination and to consider both sex and gender as spectra rather than binary concepts – the latter being a concept that is still very strong in both the law and legal studies.

Keywords: gender, law, LGBTQIA+, intersex, civil registration.

Introduction

One of the first pieces of information asked and given about a newborn child – even before birth – is their sex. At birth, each child is assigned a sex, chosen from only two options, male or female. This process is generally known as sex assignment at birth.

Even though there is no requirement to do so in either international or EU law, all European countries assign sex at birth (Ghattas, 2013). This may seem to be a straightforward process, with no obstacles. Instead, it raises important issues that concern not only intersex people as a minority group but also the whole of society.

Usually, when a child is born, after a visual exam – "a superficial check of genitalia" (Cannoot and Decoster, 2020, p. 30) – doctors assign sex, and produce a birth certificate (Viggiani, 2018). In some countries, this certificate is then given to civil registry officials, who register the child and their sex in the civil registry. This is why sex assignment is strictly related to the registration of sex/gender by the public authorities. In civil law systems, this correlation is even stronger because birth registration is the main resource for informing other government records and databases (Cannoot and Decoster, 2020).

Hence, the definition of "sex assigned at birth" considered in this work is the "male or female designation that doctors ascribe to infants based on genitalia and […] marked on their birth records" (Clarke, 2022, p. 1821). Sometimes, this definition is in conflict with the concept of "biological sex" i.e., a series of sexual characteristics including, for example, sex chromosomes, gonads, genitalia, hormones and secondary sexual characteristics (Greenberg 2012). While this definition may be correct from a scientific point of view, many scholars and activists consider it dated regarding the specific circumstance of sex/gender assignment, especially when accompanied by sex binarism (Clarke, 2022). Sex assignment at birth and its consequences vary from state to state. Usually, the sex of a child needs to be registered within days of birth, but there are a few exceptions. For example, in Germany and Austria an extension period is permitted under certain conditions.

One may wonder why sex is assigned and registered. Little has been written about the rationale behind it, but its roots probably lie in the need to separate men from women, so as to introduce gender-specific rights and duties (van den Brink and Tigchelaar, 2015). Initially, gender assignment at birth was applied with the intent to exclude (e.g., women were not allowed to vote). In contrast, today, the need to assign gender has shifted towards policies that aim to protect and recognize fundamental rights. Examples of this are gender equality and anti-discrimination policies and laws. This aspect should certainly be explored further, but for reasons of space they will not be analysed in depth

in this paper. For this paper, it is relevant to note that the same mechanism – assigning and registering sex/gender – responds to different interests, and now the main function of assigning gender at birth is the state's interest in identifying its citizens (Cooper et al., 2022, p. 13) and in increasing the speed of that identification (van den Brink and Tigchelaar, 2015).

Materials and methods

This paper is based on an analysis of legislation, including international law, European Union law, and national European law. Moreover, current legal literature has also been reviewed. On the one hand, this work is descriptive, because it analyses laws and literature already produced. On the other hand, it also tries to be normative, imagining alternatives to the current state of the art, and even fictitious cases brought before the European courts – the European Court of Human Rights and the European Union Court of Justice.

The theoretical framework includes queer feminist theories. This field of research is extremely challenging, because it is not possible to analyse sex assignment at birth solely from a legal point of view.

The methodology is informed by the concept of power developed by Foucault. For Foucault, power has everyday effects – not only at an institutional and legal level – and can be positive, producing those identities that it then regulates. This is also true regarding sexuality. Indeed, the idea that there exists a "natural", "biological" body then produces a whole series of identities that deviate from the norm, and are therefore "perverse". Starting from Foucault's work, Butler reflects upon sex and gender. Specifically, Butler argues that gender is the discursive means by which so-called "biological sex" is produced, fixed and given as pre-discursive (Butler, 2007). This dichotomy implies that sex is biological, while gender is cultural. But gender as a cultural artefact is limited by sex options because sex could be considered to be, not the cause of gender, but rather its product. Butler further asserts that gender is the discursive and cultural means through which a "natural and biological sex" is produced and fixed as pre-discursive. From Butler's point of view, the gender binary is a means to reiterate oppression and violence (Butler, 2007).

Analysis

Legal issues

Sex assignment at birth, and the consequent registration of sex/gender, raises relevant legal issues, which are listed below. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list, but these are the most relevant and will be considered as examples.

Firstly, the most evident case concerns intersex individuals, who are "born with sex characteristics (sexual anatomy, reproductive organs, hormonal structure and/or levels and/or chromosomal patterns) that do not fit the typical definition of male or female" (Ghattas, 2019, p. 9). In this case, and particularly when a child is born with "atypical" genitalia, the requirement to register one of the two institutionalized sexes puts great pressure on doctors and, consequently, on parents: "The child is not M or F, but *must* be M or F, because *tertium non datur*"[1] (Rinaldi and Viggiani, 2022, p. 6). In some cases, this pressure leads to the so-called "normalization" of the child's sex, which consists of medical treatments imposed on healthy bodies. These treatments are often carried out without full consent, can be varied, and when they reach the surgical level they are defined as Intersex Genital Mutilation (IGM) (Rinaldi and Viggiani, 2022). Indeed, this is the starting point of my doctoral research. In attempting to analyse the complex relationship between intersex individuals and the law, sex assignment at birth is the first key issue that emerges.

Secondly, the law does not usually differentiate between sex and gender, using sometimes one term, and sometimes the other, without always using them correctly. An illustrative example comes from Italy, where the information "sex" ("*sesso*") is included on identity cards, and this does not change even after a legal gender recognition process that rectifies the I.D. of a trans person.

Thirdly, in assigning sex, the state presumes that the sex assigned coincides with the child's gender identity (Cooper et al., 2022). Indeed, the title of this work stems from the legal and state confusion between assigned sex and gender identity. Some authors believe that this feature of the current system of sex/gender registration violates the right to gender identity autonomy and the right to legal recognition, does not pursue a legitimate aim and is not proportionate (Cannoot and Decoster, 2020).

Fourthly, sex registration, and its inclusion on identification documents, disclose a person's sex/gender, rendering it public. Some scholars and activists believe that sex and

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[1] Translation from Italian and emphasis by the author. The literal translation of the phrase from Latin *tertium non datum* is "the third is not given", and it means that a third option is not permitted.

gender should be considered sensitive data, on a par with, for instance, sexual orientation and religion (van den Brink and Tigchelaar, 2015). Finally, a strictly binary system that only permits M/F entries – both regarding sex assignment and legal gender-recognition categories – is relevant from a human rights perspective (Cannoot and Decoster, 2020). As we will see, more and more actors in international law are recognizing the right to gender identity, not as a compulsory choice between two options, but as an act of self-determination unencumbered by a binary perception.

The issues examined above have more impact in jurisdictions where legal gender recognition is long, pathologizing and expensive. For instance, in Italy, legal gender recognition is judicial. This means that, in order to obtain rectified documents, a person must seek authorization from a judge, after compulsory psychological and psychiatric treatment that produces a diagnosis of gender incongruence. Undoubtedly, this has very high costs and waiting times, not to mention the fact that there is no legal certainty regarding the material to be presented before the judge, nor the outcome of this process.

Legal framework

There are no binding international or EU laws specifically addressing either sex assignment at birth or sex/gender registration, but the debate within the international and European contexts is growing, and some soft law has been produced. Below are the most pertinent examples for this paper:

Firstly, Document 9303 – setting non-binding standards for travel documents – of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)[2] must be considered. ICAO guidelines mention gender as one of the mandatory items of personal data and three options are allowed: M, F, or X. The EU has adopted the ICAO's approach with Council Regulation 2252/2004 and Regulation 444/2009 of the European Parliament and the Council.

Secondly, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child[3] (hereinafter "CRC") should be taken into account. Article 7 of the CRC establishes the rights to birth registration, a name, nationality and to know and be cared for by parents. In terms of birth registration, it remains up to the specific state what information should be recorded, but in terms of the minimum information that it is considered reasonable to be gathered/presented, sex is mentioned, including "the capacity to record

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[2] Specialized agency of the United Nations.

[3] The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989, and came into force in 1980.

ambiguity/nonbinary sexual identity" (Tobin and Seow, 2019, p. 247). Indeed, "consideration must be given to allowing for the registration of children born with an ambiguous sexual identity and the possibility of amending/updating birth registration details to reflect child's self-determination of their gender identity if that identity differs from the identity originally recorded" (Tobin and Seow, 2019, p. 247). The interpretation of "identity" – and what it should include – remains uncertain under the CRC; nonetheless, the onus is on states to ensure that children are free to express and enjoy their identity without discrimination or violence, especially LGBTQIA+ children (Tobin and Seow, 2019).

Within the Council of Europe, there are some pertinent documents to consider, although they are not binding. Two Parliamentary Assembly resolutions address the issue of sex/gender registration – both at birth and when considering legal gender recognition for trans people. The Assembly is calling on states to offer flexibility in registering sex at birth, respecting the newborn's right to a private life and not revealing their intersex status if there is no need (Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, 2017). Moreover, the Assembly requires that states offer a rapid, transparent and accessible legal gender recognition process, based on self-determination, for trans individuals (Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, 2015).

Similarly, the European Parliament has called upon states to allow for flexible birth registration procedures and legal gender recognition based on self-determination. The parliament also advocated for flexible procedures to change gender markers, "as long as they continue to be registered" – implying the possibility of not registering gender markers at all – and the option of gender-neutral names (European Parliament, 2019).

Another useful legal instrument is the Yogyakarta Principles Plus 10, a document addressing international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sexual characteristics. Specifically, Principle 31 establishes the right to legal recognition and suggests four key reforms that states should adopt in relation to gender registration. These are: the elimination of sex and gender on identity documents; the adoption of gender recognition laws without requirements (based on self-determination); the introduction of a multiplicity of gender marker options; and the abolition of gender registration for personal status purposes. Each of these options has pros and cons, but they all challenge the current binary registration system (Holzer, 2020).

A way forward

In thinking about an alternative system, many variables are important. However, only a few can be analysed in this paper. Here, it is fundamental to bear in mind that this is a very complex field, and each alternative brings with it related issues that are not easy to overcome.

Firstly, a growing number of activists and scholars are calling for the removal of sex/gender registration from documents or, at least, to restrict the spread of information concerning gender and to consider gender as a sensitive personal identity marker (van der Brink and Tigchelaar, 2015). Cooper and Renz (2016) reflected upon a possible decertification of gender by the state. This reform would challenge how gender is currently certified, starting with the compulsory M/F assignment at birth. Cannoot and Decoster (2020) agree with this approach, stating: "That gender matters, and always matters, does not necessarily mean, however, that gender needs to be authenticated or endorsed by the state" (p. 26). One of the major critiques of this reform concerns the development of a gender-neutral law. However, Cooper and Renz (2016) specify that, even if sex/gender is no longer assigned, this does not mean that the state automatically becomes blind to gender inequalities. From this perspective, gender-sensitive policies could be retained if they rely on self-identification. Notably, this already happens regarding other grounds of discrimination, such as religion.

A second approach involves the introduction of more gender markers alongside M/F. This is the suggestion supported by – among others – the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, and the Yogyakarta Principles, where sex/gender continues to be registered. From this perspective, the first issue emerging is the decision about which markers to introduce. The choices may be numerous and result in a struggle to grasp the complexity of sex and gender identity. Also, this approach does not seem to dismantle the binary system; on the contrary, it risks reinforcing it. It does not challenge the sex/gender binarism but simply introduces new options alongside those that are considered the norm, risking the perception of what lies outside as deviant.

A further issue stems from the movement of people. For example, a person may encounter difficulties if they are registered with a non-binary sex/gender and move to a state where only M/F options are premitted. The only state that seems to have resolved this obstacle – in a way that is relevant to private international law – is Malta. Indeed, Article 9(1) of the 2015 Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act states that "A final decision about a person's gender identity, which has been determined by a competent foreign court or responsible authority acting in accordance with the law of that country, shall be recognised in Malta" (GIGESC Act, 2015).

A third major approach envisages a long-term reform through so-called "soft decertification". From this point of view, a series of laws, adopted gradually over time, could render the registration of sex/gender unnecessary. For instance, this could include "measures to reform equality law by introducing a new, more expansive category of gender, by addressing how gendered terms are used in reproductive or parenting contexts, and by simplifying the procedure for legal recognition of gender transitioning" (Cooper et al., 2022, p.34).

Conclusion

Sex assignment at birth and sex/gender registration remain complex open questions, both because they vary greatly by state and because, although they generally raise legal issues related to fundamental rights, the remedies cannot be simplistic. Even though they respond to the state's need for identification and, more generally, legal certainty, sex/gender are neither binary nor fixed, so the law will always fail if trying to crystallize them into legal categories (Cannoot and Decoster, 2020). Undoubtedly, the national context needs to be considered: it is fundamental to differentiate between a civil law system and a common law system, to analyse the legislation already adopted, and to consider the specific political context. The soft decertification approach, from a theoretical point of view, appears to be the most pragmatic and feasible way forward. However, it must then be introduced concretely into the different national legislations.

Further considerations concern the European scenario, i.e., fictitious cases brought before the European Court of Human Rights (hereinafter "ECtHR"), and the Court of Justice of the European Union (hereinafter "CJEU"). As regards the ECtHR, it would be interesting to investigate, in the light of previous case law, whether state interference in assigning and registering sex/gender would pass the proportionality test.[4] In addition, in relation to the CJEU, it would be worthwhile to reason about the "portability of personal status" when moving between member states, in the light of the fundamental right to free movement under Article 45 TFEU and the case law of the court. These possibilities will be explored further in future research.

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[4] Some rights enshrined in the European Convention of Human Rights – for instance, the right to privacy under Article 8 ECHR – may be restricted if required by law and necessary in a democratic society.

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Healing the hearth (by Håkan Röjder)

"It would be completely alien to life": On heteronormative bordering within asylum decisions relating to LGBTIQ* refugees in Germany

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Abstract

In this paper, I seek to investigate how heteronormative and Eurocentric assumptions influence asylum decisions affecting LGBTIQ* refugees in Germany and their role in bordering practices. With the help of an intersectional perspective, and particularly by including queerfeminist and postcolonial critics, I aim to examine co-constitutional effects between normative power relations (such as heteronormativity and Eurocentrism) and the territorial border. Following Étienne Balibar's conception of the border (2002; 2009), I am able to locate the negotiation of the border at the scene of the asylum decision and examine the reasoning behind it. Therefore, I question the imagined neutrality of legal and administrative procedures within the European asylum system. In this paper, administration is considered to be part of governmentality (Foucault, 1978). This enables a connection to be made between asylum decisions, bordering practices and power relations. These connections are specified in reference to María Lugones and her work on the modern colonial gender system (Lugones, 2008). The paper is based on an analysis of the reasons behind asylum decision notifications sent to queer claimants in Germany. The data reveals a normative influence on decisions about whether asylum, and also legal access to the territory, is granted or not. For LGBTIQ* asylum seekers, the border seems selectively permeable in relation to normative assumptions, which can be traced back to the modern colonial gender system. This leads to the conclusion that there exist co-constitutional effects of bordering practices and global power relations.

Keywords: Asylum Decision, Intersectionality, Bordering, LGBTIQ*

Introduction

According to European Law, persecution based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity is a valid reason for seeking asylum (Europäisches Parlament and der Rat 20.12.2011). Nevertheless, LGBTIQ*[1] refugees face various hurdles within the European asylum procedure (Danisi et al. 2021; Spijkerboer 2013). Alongside questions of legal support (Danisi et al., 2021, 192-201, 222-234) or difficulties at the hearing due to (lack of) preparation (ibid., pp.185-192) and the circumstances of the hearing (ibid., pp. 205-213), the asylum decision is one of the key elements of administrative migration control and is therefore of special interest. Researchers have pointed out that the credibility of the claimant's queerness is a central challenge (Middlekoop 2013; Morgan 2006; Murray 2014) – especially due to the specific psychosocial barriers faced by queer refugees (Berg and Millbank 2009). Furthermore, both stereotypical and heteronormative beliefs influence the outcome of the asylum decision (Murray 2017; Markard 2013; Mole 2020; Tschalaer 2020). The so-called discretion requirement is of special interest here. It describes the practice of rejecting asylum if the claimants could protect themselves in their country of origin by hiding their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Even though the Court of Justice of the European Union classified such reasoning as unlawful in 2013 (CJEU 2013), activists (Dörr et al. 2021) and researchers from various disciplines have criticised its ongoing application in Germany (Sußner 2012; Sußner 2020a, 236–273; Sußner 2020b; Sußner 2020c; Weßels 2013; Mole 2020).

I worked as a consultant for queer refugees for more than three years, and I accompanied around 90 LGBTIQ* asylum seekers through various stages of their asylum procedure. During those years, only 2.7 percent of all the clients at our advice centre, which specializes in queer asylum seekers, received a positive response from the Federal Office of Migration and Refugees (BAMF), the institution that oversees the administration of (forced) migration. The vast majority were rejected. In that position, I gained the impression of an incongruent decision-making process: there seemed to be no difference in reasoning whether claimants were well prepared and empowered or insecure and ashamed to talk. These circumstances awoke my interest in conducting a scientific examination and questioning of asylum decision-making processes. Due to the backdrop of high rejection rates and the primary function of BAMF being to decide between legal entry to Germany or exclusion, the focus on the territorial border and its role emerged. Is there a correlation between (hetero)normative assumptions and

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[1] LGBTIQ* stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, inter* and queer and describes the wide range of sexual orientations and gender identities. Following up on activist discourses, I use queer as a synonym for LGBTIQ* in this paper.

bordering practices? How is the border negotiated at the scene of asylum decisions relating to queer refugees in Germany?

To examine the co-constitutional effects of normative power relations and the territorial border, I have investigated the reasons given within asylum decision notifications issued to queer claimants in Germany by employing a postcolonial and queerfeminist theoretic framework. I seek to question the neutrality of legal and administrative procedures such as asylum decisions by means of an interdisciplinary application of my perspective, informed by critical cultural studies and my experience of consulting practice. Before presenting my analysis, I want to start by giving an overview of my methodological approach, followed by a mapping out of the normative marks along the lines of argument. To conclude, I seek to contextualize these results within bordering practices and current legal changes.

Materials and methods

This paper is based on eight asylum notifications issued to queer refugees with various sexual orientations and gender identities who have travelled from Ethiopia, Iran, Jamaica, Kenya, Russia, Senegal, and Tunisia. Due to my position within the field and the resulting special access to empirical data, a brief reflection on my dual role as consultant and researcher seems necessary. For example, how can dependences be reflected? Is it possible to conduct research while having an ongoing consultant–client relationship? And are these thoughts already paternalistic? Following Foucault's ideas (1978), the belief that one can be freed from power relations is illusionary. Therefore, the reproduction of such power structures and the question of who is benefiting became the key issue regarding my access to the field and guiding my ethical reflection. I concluded that it is impossible to slip out of my role as consultant to ask clients for their documents. It appears dubious to use the trusting relationship in order to sample my data. This is why I only asked clients with whom I no longer had an ongoing working relationship and employed the advice centre's network for further data. All the documents I collected, as well as those I received from colleagues, were redacted, so that it was no longer possible to draw any identifying conclusions about the person concerned.

Since the paper does not focus on a country-specific argument, nor one that follows a particular queer life trajectory, the selection of documents is intentionally broad. The selection deliberately includes BAMF notices received by people from countries on different continents, but I could not make a concrete selection of countries due to the limited access. Due to ethical concerns, I could only ask for documents from clients

who were no longer participating in the offers of the counselling centre where I worked. This is why I saturated my data with documents from other counselling centres in Germany and therefore only had a limited influence on the selection of countries.

In order to extract the normative subtext, I applied a critical reading procedure: so-called Queer Reading, a term attributed to Eve Kosofky Sedgwick (1997), which combines discourse-analytical and deconstructivist approaches with queerfeminist criticism in order to visualize and decode heteronormative signs within texts (Babka and Hochreiter 2008). The broad definition of the concept of a text has allowed me to also use legal documents – which are usually perceived to be neutral – for such an analysis.

Following intersectional perspectives, this method is not only applicable to a heteronormative subtext but also to various, and interwoven, power structures. Instead of understanding different forms of oppression as separate or additive to each other, the concept of intersectionality makes it possible to see their correlations and interactions and thus reveal social complexity. Intersectionality has its origins in the activism of women of colour[2] and was marked in scientific contexts by the critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989). Although intersectionality is usually marked by the triad of race, class and gender, the list of power imbalances is infinite, as Judith Butler (1991, 210) notes. In this paper, referring to the context of my research, distinguished facets of gender and race, i.e. heteronormativity and Eurocentrism serve as additions to that list of power imbalances.

Apart from the theoretical framework, intersectionality also holds potential as a tool for analysis. One of the key issues here is the application of categories: How can categories be used to mark inequalities without essentializing the same? Leslie McCall (2005) describes different ways of operationalizing categories aligned with the tension between the need for visibility and representation while at the same time running the risk of essentialization. A central finding of my research is "that nothing fits neatly except as a result of imposing a stable and homogenizing order on a more unstable and heterogeneous social reality" (ibid., p. 1777). In conclusion, this approach leads to a perspective that problematizes homogenizing orders and the inequalities they produce, rather than focusing on the marginalized ones.[3]

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[2] The Combahee River Collective already wrote 1977 about the intersecting discriminations of women of colour (Combahee River Collective 2017).

[3] In accordance with the interdisciplinary profile of this paper, that operationalization of categories fits with the post-categorical approach of critical race theory and legal gender studies. Here, the aim is to legally problematize the hegemonic structure, which produces inequalities rather than transferring the

Since the Reader in the application of Queer Reading, taken from Babka and Hochreiter (2008), concentrates on the framework of the methodology, rather than on the concrete steps for the actual reading procedure, I used Close Reading for the tangible text work. This method connects very well with the focuses of Queer Reading "[b]ecause a casual reader misses out on untold riches: fresh dimensions of meaning and inspiration. […]; the close reader becomes convinced that here there is more than first meets the eye" (Schur 1998, 3). I used three steps to read my empirical data, the notifications from BAMF:

1. Read with a pencil in hand, and annotate the text

2. Look for patterns in the things you've noticed about the text – repetitions, contradictions, similarities

3. Ask questions about the patterns you've noticed – especially how and why. (Kain 1998)

I focused on particular sections of the documents, which contained arguments for or against granting the specific legal status of protection and classified the focal points of that content. Then, I drew cross-references between the notifications within the framework of normative and hegemonic power relations, i.e., heteronormativity and Eurocentrism, which permeate the lines of argument. The results are presented in the next section.

Heteronormative Eurocentrism – Eurocentric Heteronormativity: Lines of Argument within the Asylum Decision

Following Petra Sußner, I take the discretion requirement as a key focal point underpinning the influence of the heteronormative susceptibility of legal asylum reasonings (Sußner 2020a, 259). Therefore, Sußner classified the various appearances of lines of argument, which are easily permeated by hints to a discreet life.[4] Alongside the direct link to a secret behaviour, there are also indirect references to the proverbial closet (Sußner, 2020a, pp. 265–274). Sußner uses this classification on the basis of legal research and focuses on legal pitfalls and possibilities of juridical compensation. I draw

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burden of proof to those affected. This approach has already been used by German-speaking legal research for the context of queer migration; see Sußner (2019) and Markard (2013).

[4] By a discreet life, the performance of a cis and heterosexual life course is meant, in which the stigmatized or criminalized sexual orientation and/or gender identity remains concealed in order to avoid persecution.

upon this framework and apply my perspective to examine the heteronormative and Eurocentric load along these lines of argument.[5]

As mentioned above, the discretion reasoning in its immediate form was declared unlawful in 2013 (CJEU, 2013). Nevertheless, such arguments are still to be found long after that. For example, in a rejection notification from BAMF in January 2019 sent to a cis-male homosexual from Tunisia:

> The applicant has not lived his sexual orientation *outwardly*, it is important to him that friends, neighbours and family do not become aware of it. According to these standards, it can be assumed that the applicant can continue to live in Tunisia without persecution despite his sexual orientation.

> The applicant has already lived his sexual orientation *discreetly* in his country of origin. For seven years, the applicant has been living together with his partner. Even over such a long period of time, it was never desirable for the applicant to *make his relationship public.*

> The applicant, who left Tunisia by air *without being persecuted*, is also not threatened with significant persecution on account of his sexual orientation in the event of his return to Tunisia. (Annex IV, p.4; emphasis AN)[6]

Similarly, in August 2019, a lesbian cis-female refugee from Russia, who sought asylum together with her long-term partner, was rejected by means of the discretion requirement:

> Even in the event of a return, it is not sufficiently likely that the applicant's sexual orientation will become known. […] On this basis, the applicant was unable to give the impression that she considers the public expression of her sexual orientation to be obligatory or identity-forming for her. In terms of her sexual orientation in the Russian Federation, *she has never publicly expressed it*. At the same time, despite repeated enquiries

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[5] Although the empirical data offers enough material to provide several examples to each of Sußner's categories, I focus on a smaller sample of the most expressive sections of passages to underpin my thesis. I mark key words within the quotes. All the passages were translated by me, and the original German versions are to be found in footnotes attached to each quote.

[6] In the original: Der Antragsteller hat seine sexuelle Orientierung nicht nach außen gelebt, es ist ihm wichtig, das [sic.] Freunde Nachbarn und seine Familie keine Kenntnis davon erhalten. Nach diesen Maßstäben ist davon auszugehen, dass der Antragsteller trotz seiner sexuellen Orientierung weiterhin ohne Verfolgung in Tunesien leben kann. Der Antragsteller lebte seine sexuelle Orientierung bereits im Heimatland diskret. Seit sieben Jahren lebt der Antragsteller bereits mit seinem Lebenspartner zusammen. Selbst über einen derart langen Zeitraum war es für den Antragsteller nie erstrebenswert, diese Beziehung öffentlich zu machen. Dem unverfolgt über dem Luftweg ausgereisten Antragsteller droht auch nicht mit beachtlicher Wahrscheinlichkeit bei einer Rückkehr nach Tunesien eine Verfolgung aufgrund seiner sexuellen Orientierung.

about feelings, inner conflicts or possible restriction on returning to the Russian Federation, she has never given the impression, let alone concretely stated, that it had burdened her in any way or would burden her in the future *to live out her sexual orientation as she has done so far*. This is also supported by the fact that, even after her arrival in Europe, she did *not publicly* disclose her sexual orientation, although this would be possible for her here without further ado. […]

However, due to the *anonymity* of the aforementioned Russian cities and taking into account the *applicant's previous lifestyle*, it cannot be assumed that her sexual orientation will become known and thus trigger persecution by non-governmental third parties. (Annex V, p. 7f; emphasis AN)[7]

In both notifications, BAMF uses wording such as *not outwardly*, *discreet*, *anonymous* and *(not) public(ly)* to describe the applicants' former lifestyles and assumes that they can live safely in their country of origin due to a lack of emphasis on the burden that comes along with a life in hiding, or a failure to demonstrate the desire for a publicly outed life at the hearing. In the first example, the institution even states that there was no persecution in the past at all. These lines of argument are a direct reference to remaining in the proverbial closet for the applicant's own safety. The second example is interwoven with the reference to anonymous larger cities within the same country and the possibility of living there anonymously.[8] This raises the questions of whether queer asylum seekers must behave in an extroverted manner for their application to be taken seriously, and whether a public queer lifestyle is treated as a prerequisite for the approval of protection status. Following the post-categorical approach of legal gender

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[7] In the original: Auch bei einer Rückkehr ist ein Bekanntwerden der sexuellen Orientierung der Antragstellerin nicht mit hinreichender Wahrscheinlichkeit zu erwarten. […] Davon ausgehend konnte die Antragstellerin nicht den Eindruck vermitteln, dass sie eine öffentliche Auslebung ihrer sexuellen Orientierung für sich selbst als verpflichtend oder identitäsprägend empfindet. So hat sie nach eigener Aussage ihre sexuelle Orientierung in der Russischen Föderation nie öffentlich ausgelebt. Gleichzeitig hat sie trotz mehrfacher Nachfrage nach Gefühlen, inneren Konflikten oder auch möglichen Einschränkungen bei einer Rückkehr in die Russische Föderation zu keiner Zeit den Eindruck vermittelt, geschweige denn konkret dargelegt, dass es sie in irgend einer [sic.] Art und Weise belastet hat oder in Zukunft belasten würde, ihre sexuelle Orientierung so wie bisher auszuleben. Dafür spricht auch, dass sie auch nach ihrer Ankunft in Europa ihre sexuellen Orientierung [sic.] nicht öffentlich auslebt, obwohl ihr dies hier ohne Weiteres möglich wäre. […] Jedoch ist schon aufgrund der Anonymität der genannten russischen Großstädte und unter Berücksichtigung des bisherigen Lebensstils der Antragstellerin nicht davon auszugehen, dass ihre sexuelle Orientierung bekannt und damit Verfolgung durch nichtsstaatliche Dritte auslösen wird.

[8] This can also be classified as an indirect form of discretion reasoning; namely, the domestic escape alternative (Sußner, 2020a, pp. 270-273), where the rejection is argued on the basis of an applicant having the opportunity to avoid persecution by moving to another city where nobody knows about their queerness. The request for anonymity can be understood as a synonym for discretion. In the example above, the hint about the former way of living directly required anonymity, which is why I would list it as a variant of the direct form as well.

studies, coming out is a right, not a duty (Sußner, 2020a, p. 255). This aspect connects to the questioning of the universalization of (Western) concepts such as coming-out and the closet by Eve Kosofky Sedgwick (1990) and opens up space for a deconstructing theorization of the seemingly neutral BAMF decisions presented here: queer life stories in subaltern positions and/or repressive contexts are measured by a German institution in comparison to Euro-American assumptions about what such a queer lifestyle should look like. On this point, Sedgwick urges us to consider whether there is a framework of queer identity, which is not "already structured by an implicit, transindividual Western project or fantasy of eradicating that identity" (Sedgwick, 1990, p. 41).

This perspective connects very well to postcolonial discourses, where the dominance of the Global North is treated as a key element of colonial continuity, especially in the field of knowledge production (Quijano 2000). María Lugones notes the correlation between gendered and colonial power relations in her analysis of the "modern colonial gender system" (Lugones 2008, p. 1). With her theory of the mutual re-production of the "gender system" and the "Coloniality of Power", Lugones is also referring to heteronormative imprints: "The gender system is heterosexualist, as heterosexuality permeates racialized patriarchal control over production, including knowledge, and over collective authority" (Lugones 2007, p. 206). This intersectional differentiation between postcolonial perspectives undertaken by Lugones can also be applied to discourses on "the West and the Rest" (Hall 2018), as elaborated by Stuart Hall. When transferring the colonial dichotomy onto the scene of gender and sexuality, the imagination of the queer *other*[9] becomes closely linked to Euro-American self-representation. Queerness functions as a neo-colonial[10] marker of the distinction between the LGBTIQ*-friendly nations of the Global North and those of the queerphobic Global South: the former, which grant asylum to those whom they identify as properly queer versus the latter, which criminalize and persecute sexual and gender diversity.[11,12] As well as the danger of overlooking queer-hostile structures in

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[9] I use italics for the term *other* to highlight the constructed character of the concept.

[10] The term neo-colonial is used here for all phenomena that reproduce dichotomies and power structures stemming from the colonial era in new or different settings, thereby manifesting colonial relations. In reference to this, postcoloniality describes the problematization of, and the break with, those colonial continuities without negating them or assuming that they have already been overcome.

[11] This juxtaposition fits seamlessly into the colonial dichotomization of "modern versus backward". In her analysis of the geopolitical classification of homophobia, Nikita Dhawan (2015) identifies a historical amnesia in Euro-American discourses. By this, she is alluding to the implementation of queer-hostile structures and legislation by the colonial powers, which is why the current situation of persecution in the Global South can certainly be seen as Europe's colonial legacy.

[12] Jasbir K. Puar notes an increasing trend, in which visibility and being outed are treated as "the dominant barometers of social progress" (Puar 2013, p. 338).

Euro-America, this logic does not leave any space for sexual epistemes that extend beyond Western concepts.[13]

This becomes particularly clear when looking at the examples described above. The requirement to demonstrate the desire to live openly as queer could be seen as a universalization of a particular Western assumption about what a queer life should look like. In particular, the direct form of the discretion requirement, in which an outed life – following the dominant Western notion of a queer lifestyle – is seen as a prerequisite for the need for protection, can thus be characterized as a form of neo-colonial continuity. This theorization also fits into forms of discretion reasoning that are rather more indirect; for example, in the following rejection from 2019 in a BAMF notification sent to a transperson from Iran.[14]

> For her as a transsexual who has changed from a woman to a man, the future should even be much easier, because as a man she will suffer fewer restrictions on her freedom of movement in Iran than before. (Annex VII: p. 5)[15]

Here, BAMF displays an overlapping of hetero-, cisnormative and patriarchal logics. The heteropatriarchal system is stylized as a protective factor, which will grant privileges to the claimant after a full transition to the male gender. According to BAMF, this will not only guarantee protection but will improve upon the claimant's previous living situation.[16] Although BAMF does not explicitly refer to an anonymous or discreet

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[13] This suggests parallels with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's (1993) critique of the discourse on widow-burning Sati in India. Spivak problematizes the discourses surrounding Sati and its banning by the colonial administration without defending or endorsing the practice of burning widows. She focuses on the lack of inclusion of the women who were actually threatened by widow-burning. Nikita Dhawan has already transferred Spivak's critique to the context of global queerness when adapting her famous quote: "the white queer is trying to save the brown queer from the brown straight" (Dhawan 2015, p. 41). This paternalistic narrative encompasses the interaction between (seemingly) emancipatory politics and the consolidation of hegemonic orders and the susceptibility of queer activism to becoming complicit with other axes of power such as race, class and/or gender. Thus, there is a danger of functioning as a queer Western imperial project and of negating postcolonial queer agencies (ibid.)

[14] This line of argument fits into Sußner's category of a binary notion of sexuality (Sußner 2020a, p. 273f). By using the example of bisexuality and the administrative revision, whether the claimant could waive the homosexual variation of themselves, Sußner reveals the close interconnection between the rejecting arguments and a strictly binary conception of gender and sexuality. This logic can also be applied to the following example, where the institution recommends that the claimant abandons their own queerness in favour of heteropatriarchal privileges.

[15] In the original: Für sie als von der Frau zum Mann gewordenen Transsexuelle dürfte die Zukunft sogar deutlich einfacher sein, denn als Mann wird sie im Iran weniger Beschränkungen in ihrer Bewegungsfreiheit erleiden als bisher.

[16] This hint leaves the impression that BAMF intends to directly prevent a potential hook in order to justify the asylum application with a focus on gender-specific persecution.

lifestyle, the logic of its argument only works if the claimant lives in a way that conforms to heteropatriarchy – i.e., with the concealment of any queerness. As long as the claimant's queer side remains unrecognized after the transition and the gender performance can be seen as exclusively cis-male, there will be no danger of persecution since the claimant will conform with the heteropatriarchal norm. This approach does not question the social order; rather, it discusses the legitimacy or the need to break with that order, as described by the claimant. In this way, BAMF fails to recognize or problematize oppressive power relations; instead, it reformulates them into a protective mechanism. This reveals a huge reduction in the complexity of queer subaltern realities and for a rigid binary understanding of gender and sexuality. Following queerfeminist critics, the reference to a life conforming to the gender binary can be understood as heteronormative regulation.

Another form of indirect discretion reasoning is the truth insinuation (Sußner, 2020a, pp. 265–267). One variation of this is to be seen in the following example:

> *It would be completely alien to life* to assume that a relevant proportion of the Kenyan population is not homosexually inclined and lives out this inclination within the framework of *the country's customary* circumstances. (Annex II: p.4; emphasis AN)[17]

In 2016, a cis-male gay from Kenya was rejected, inter alia due to this argument. BAMF correctly annotates queerness as a cross-cutting social phenomenon and therefore assumes that there are also queer people in Kenya. At the same time, the existing criminal prosecution is euphemistically paraphrased as *customary circumstances*, as the framework for acting out one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity. By analysing the subtext, the hint about these possibilities, restricted by criminalizing laws, can be understood as a link to remaining in the proverbial closet in order to live without fear of legal consequences. This example illustrates the close interconnection between hegemonic power structures: The wording "it would be completely alien to life" raises the question of who assesses, and on the basis of which standards, what is regarded as realistic or not. This heteronormative regulation is interwoven with Eurocentric valuations, in this case even a de-valuation, of the credibility of the whole narrative.

The imagined neutrality of administrative proceedings and their outcome can be deconstructed using Donna Haraway's thoughts (1988) on situated knowledge. The argument described above produces BAMF as a neutral authority that measures asylum claims against seemingly objective standards. It uses the "god trick of seeing everything

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[17] In the original: Es wäre völlig lebensfremd anzunehmen, dass nicht auch Kenia ein relevanter Bevölkerungsanteil homosexuell veranlagt ist und diese Veranlagung auch in dem von den landesüblichen Umständen geprägten Rahmen auslebt.

from nowhere" (Haraway, 1988, p. 581), which Haraway describes as a belief in the possibility of completely detached and neutral knowledge. Instead, she sees knowledge as always situated and as a negotiation of partial views. This shift enables us to expose so-called rationality as "power-sensitive conversation" (Haraway, 1988, p. 590). The imagined neutrality of BAMF in its assessments therefore functions as a mechanism for maintaining power structures, rather than as an approach to determine what is (imagined as) true. Haraway allows us to see the omnipresence of those axes within the asylum decision.

Haraway's perspective on knowledge also works for the second variant of the truth-insinuating discretion requirement, which classifies the entire narrative as implausible. A Jamaican claimant, who does not clearly describe their own gender but identifies as gay, was rejected in 2019 with the following passage:

> Moreover, it is already *fundamentally unbelievable* that he, who claims to have felt persecuted by civil society throughout the country, should have publicly prostituted himself in a park dressed and made up as a woman in what he perceives to be a strongly homophobic society. This *fundamentally contradicts* his stated fear of persecution, because precisely then it would have been the obvious thing to do, not to offer oneself publicly, and certainly not styled as a woman, and thus make oneself a target of homophobic acts by third parties as a homosexual who is allegedly known throughout the country. (Annex VI, p. 4; emphasis AN)[18]

These strong formulations, including *fundamentally unbelievable* and *fundamentally contradicts*, demonstrate BAMF's doubt regarding the claimant's credibility: It is considered untrustworthy to be publicly queer and prostitute oneself for queer sex in a society that is perceived as homophobic. Also, this narrative is measured against seemingly neutral standards from a place imagined to stand outside of the matrix of global power relations. There is no attempt to grasp the subaltern queer reality.

The exposed way of life described here and its assessment as unrealistic is particularly paradoxical when considered in light of the previous analysis. On the one hand, a discreet lifestyle is treated as a prerequisite for appearing credible at all (Appendix VI); on the other hand, a life inside the closet is regarded as lacking persecution experiences (Appendices II, IV, V, VII). The reasoning in these examples seems somewhat

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[18] In the original: Grundlegend unglaubhaft ist zudem bereits, dass er, der sich landesweit durch die Zivilgesellschaft verfolgt gefühlt haben will, sich in der von ihm als stark homophob empfundenen Gesellschaft öffentlich als Frau geschminkt und gekleidet in einem Park prostituiert haben soll. Dies widerspricht grundsätzlich seiner angeführten Verfolgungsangst, denn gerade dann wäre es doch das Naheliegende gewesen, sich nicht öffentlich und erst recht nicht als Frau gestylt anzubieten und sich so als angeblich landesweit bekannter Homosexueller zu Zielscheibe homophober Handlungen Dritter zu machen.

contradictory, which gives the impression of arbitrariness. It can be seen by cross-referencing between the rejecting BAMF notifications that a negative response always seems to be justifiable – no matter how queer refugees have behaved in their country of origin or what they have experienced. This impression is reinforced when examining asylum-granting notifications, where BAMF only states that the claimant fulfilled the conditions for refugee status, but does not explain why.[19] Such decision-making leaves scope for different reasoning tendencies.[20] Although it is randomness that first meets the eye, the rejection notifications in particular appear to be adjusted individually to the specific case and are characterized by heteronormative and Eurocentric logics. Following the postcolonial and queerfeminist theorization above, the scope of decision-making needs to be regarded as permeated and produced by the modern colonial gender system.

Conclusion

In summary, this analysis has shown that territorial exclusion is performatively implemented via normative conceptions. The dichotomization of *one's Own* and *the Foreign* is negotiated at the scene of assessing the individual refugee narrative in relation to societal norms and global power axes. When claims are rejected, requests for asylum are rated as not worthy of protection. This demonstrates the "world-configuring function" (Balibar, 2002, p. 79) of borders, which is annotated by Étienne Balibar's

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[19] The recognizing notification only contains a heading, which states: "the conditions for granting refugee status have been met" (Annex VIII, p. 3), followed by a short passage explaining the conditions of that status with a text module. Afterwards, BAMF writes: "The investigation of facts has shown that the applicant is outside her country of origin due to well-founded fear of persecution and therefore needs refugee protection pursuant to §3 para. 1 of the Asylum Act" (Ibid., p. 4). There is no further reasoning within the documents that claimants receive. In my experience of asylum notifications sent to queer refugees in Germany, the recognizing documents are always structured like the example above: text modules describing the legal conditions and others confirming the fulfilment, but no reasoning. This is why I have only used one recognition note to demonstrate by example the arbitrary impression given by justifications granting or rejecting asylum claims.

In an informal interview with a BAMF employee, they stated that recognizing notifications also need a justification, but that person classified such a statement as requiring significantly less work than a rejection.

[20] It is important to state that BAMF as an institution is permeated by global power axes, as well as every single employee. The impact of personal positioning, experience and education opens up an area in which different decisions are practised. Individual knowledge and attitudes, especially towards gender and sexuality, are (unconsciously) included in the (de)valuation of asylum claims. This enables some leeway for the decision, which may affect it positively as well as negatively. Referring to Dhawan (2020), the legal administration fulfils an ambivalent role as pharmakon: poison and medicine, or cause and solution, in one.

definition.[21] By understanding borders as "always overdetermined, in that sense, sanctioned, reduplicated and relativized by other geopolitical divisions" (ibid.), (hetero)normative and territorial borders, as well as their mutuality, can be grasped equally. The most important aspect for contextualizing the analysis above is the identification of borders as heterogeneous and ubiquitous, which enables a situation in which "*some borders are no longer situated at the borders at all* [...]. They are in fact elsewhere, wherever selective controls are to be found" (Balibar, 2002, p. 84; emphasis in the original). Thus, BAMF can be understood as an administrative apparatus of the border, and so it is possible to locate the territorial border and its performance of (non)permeability at the scene of the asylum decision. This also means that BAMF fulfils its governmental function as a decision-making body.

According to Michel Foucault, governmentality describes a complex entity of institutions and mechanisms that exists with the aim of wielding power over people (Foucault, 2004, p. 163). Discourses and practices of safety, the so-called security dispositive, are key mechanisms by which governmental administrations in particular reinforce their powerful impact on society (ibid., p. 161). With BAMF as the administrative institution, managing and controlling (forced) migration, discourses and actions of preserving safety are reflected in the (de)valuation of queer refugee narratives.[22] The security dispositive permeates asylum decisions via different mechanisms, as shown in this analysis. On the one hand, it is infused with the various forms of discretion requirements, which offer simple solutions while at the same time reducing the complexity of the realities of subaltern queers and trivializing their oppression. In part, these references to discreet lifestyles could be seen as a shift in responsibility, onto the protection-seekers. On the other hand, the security dispositive

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[21] Even though the term definition for the context of a border is to be treated with caution, following Balibar's thoughts: "The idea of a simple definition of what constitutes a border is, by definition, absurd: to mark out a border is, precisely, to define a territory, to delimit it, and so to register the identity of that territory, or confer one upon it. Conversely, however, to define or identify in general is nothing other than to trace a border, to assign boundaries or borders [...]. The theorist who attempts to define what a border is is in danger of going round in circles, as the very representation of the border is the precondition for any definition" (Balibar, 2002, p. 76).

[22] Sexuality plays a key role in security discourses around migration. A central discursive formation within the safety dispositive is the phenomenon of sexual exceptionalism. This term, coined by Jasbir K. Puar (2007), describes "glossing over [one's] own policing of the boundaries of acceptable gender, racial and class formations" (Puar, 2007, p. 9) and the production of a form of (homo)normativity, which ties the recognition of subjects to national agendas (ibid.). This can lead to the instrumentalization of queerness for national ambitions. Gabriele Dietze (2019) elaborates upon the phenomenon of sexual exceptionalism in the German context and describes a deeply rooted omnipresence of gendered and colonial levels within (right-wing) discourses on migration refusal. Gender and sexuality emerge as central markers for the safety dispositive. Although this cognition is not only specific to the context of queer migration, I want to stick to the given empirical data and the main research focus on LGBTIQ* asylum seekers.

is reflected in the lack of arguments presented within decisions of recognition, where queer claimants are stated to have fulfilled the conditions, and no further reasoning is needed. Here, it is not possible to state whether the difference is that claimants behaved homonormatively enough, or whether decision-makers were LGBTIQ*-sensitive employees. This leads to two opposing directions of propulsion of the security dispositive: in one, it serves as a mechanism saving the territorial inside from illegal immigration, and in the other it grants protection for lawful asylum seekers. As the body entrusted with the task of applying administrative procedures to decide whether to recognize or reject (queer) refugees, BAMF combines the two sides of the security dispositive and thus is to be seen as governmental practice.

The continuing (re)production of political space is of central interest within that entity: saving the territory from what is classified as unauthorized immigration ultimately maintains order on the inside. In this way, legitimate access is gained through complying with that order. The analysis of the asylum decisions presented above demonstrates how normative notions permeate – or rather are being handled as preconditions to – the overall evaluation of compatibility. Linking that knowledge to the overriding function of BAMF to control border crossing, the European or national border constitutes itself along interwoven power axes of (inter alia) heteronormativity and Eurocentrism. In the context of queer refugees, this leads to a matrix of power relations in which access to the EU or Germany is measured and in which the territorial border becomes permeable to some, but not to others.

On 20 September 2022, the German Ministry of the Interior revealed an interesting outlook by publishing a new service regulation for the employees of BAMF, instructing them to no longer apply the discretion requirement to queer asylum seekers (Lesben- und Schwulenverband Deutschland 20.09.2022). Activists summarized a positive trend towards the recognition of LGBTIQ* refugees six months after this legal change (Patrick Dörr 05.04.2023). Nevertheless, such a ban does not yet fully deconstruct the described mutuality of normative assumptions, power structures and bordering practices. Furthermore, it remains to be observed whether this service regulation is intended to apply to all variances of discretion reasoning and how the practice of decision-making changes with that. These aspects raise follow-up research questions to monitor the pervasiveness and co-constitutional effects of normativities within the asylum procedure.

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Investigating Institutional Sexism in a Higher Education Institution Using New Institutionalism Theory through a Gendered Lens

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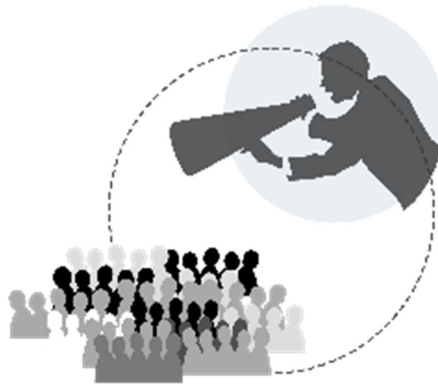
Abstract

New Institutionalism Theory assists researchers in studying how workers/actors in an institution are 'coordinated' by arrangements made by others and the impact this can have on different categories of workers on the basis of gender, nationality, sector, age and caring responsibilities.

In this paper, I seek to identify 'problematic' issues within a given institution – where workers are promised one thing but in fact undergo a totally different experience – that can teach us about gender discrimination in the institution. This paper is a theoretical analysis which will then be applied to a future study on the University of Malta, where

I will be constructing a survey that will take into consideration the impact that work–life balance policies and measures designed within a particular higher education institution have on three sets of workers: academics/administrative/industrial/technical staff and those working on contract.

New Institutionalism will be combined with other theories because, when used on its own, it has three main weaknesses. The first is that the theory in general does not pay attention to the role of human agency in institutional changes; the second is that little attention is paid to the technical and resource environment; and the third is that it focuses on only one institutional field. In addition, although I intend to use the same measurements and procedures employed in other, similar research studies conducted abroad, variables used in other studies may not be relevant in Malta. This is because countries have different cultures and different policies in place. For example, the Maltese still perceive women as the main carers within the family. In addition, Malta also has the lowest fertility rate of all EU member states.

The variables themselves all have weaknesses, which means they do not give accurate results. Therefore, this survey has to be reinforced with other theories and research methods, such as qualitative and text analyses, in order to achieve the most precise result.

Introduction

New Institutionalism is the study of various schools of institutionalism, which all focus on the pressure imposed by formal and informal rules within institutions. However, the issue of structure and agency, in other words the relationship between the institution and the individual, remains an ongoing debate within the various schools of institutionalism because they all present distinctive arguments (Hall and Taylor, 1996). New institutionalism ignores the gendered power within institutions (Mackay, Kenny and Chappell, 2010). Feminists have informed us about the ways in which institutions 'accommodate changes in membership while simultaneously disadvantaging the newcomers' (Kenney, 1996, p. 462).

Gender is socially constructed and looked upon as being part of the 'logic of appropriateness'. It is therefore difficult to detect in institutions (Chappell, 2006; March and Olsen, 1989). It is vitally important to distinguish the bias present within institutions and identify the gendered institutional regulations and instruments that are

affecting gender (Mackay, Kenny and Chappell, 2010). Gendered dynamics in an institutional analysis can be identified through discursive methodologies (Kenny, 2013). A thorough investigation of the formal written rules included in collective agreements is required because certain clauses may appear to be beneficial on paper while in practice they may prove to be disadvantageous. They might negatively affect a marginalized group of workers, such as women. The everchanging relationship between gender and institutions over time can be determined by using a historical approach. It identifies how socially constructed beliefs are embedded in modern institutions, which may welcome some changes while restricting others (Mackay, 2009; Chappell, 2011; Kenny, 2013).

New Institutionalism offers researchers various mechanisms that, if used properly, can reveal the gendered motives of an institution and their unavoidable consequences (Mackay and Chappell, 2010). The theory starts out by examining the ways in which institutions manipulate agency – the conduct of actors – through policies, rules and norms. These 'bring about or resist change in institutions' (Mackay and Chappell, 2010, p. 1). It therefore aids researchers in examining how actors/employees working in an institution are manipulated by the structure's actions, which are referred to as centralized policymakers. The decisions, policies, norms and measures they proclaim are known as 'ruling relations' (Mackay and Chappell, 2010, p. 1).

When used on its own, New Institutionalism has three main weaknesses. The first is that the theory in general does not pay attention to the role of human agency in institutional changes; the second is that little attention is paid to the technical and resource environment; and the third is that it focuses on only one institutional field. New Institutionalism will be used through a gendered lens to conduct research at the University of Malta, where some of the issues that are likely to emerge will be due to cultural and structural constraints. In order to overcome these weaknesses, and fully understand the nature of higher education institutions, it is best to combine the theory with other theories.

This paper commences with a historical background of New Institutionalism, focusing on various institutionalism schools that address the pressure imposed by both formal and informal rules within institutions. It continues by discussing the manipulation of structuration and agency, structuration being the institution and agency being the workers, where both have the potential to influence each other. The paper continues by exploring New Institutionalism Theory through a gendered lens in order to distinguish and analyse formal and informal rules, norms and practices through mapping. This will certainly determine the formation of gender within institutions (Lovenduski, 2011). Later, the paper explains how the theory can be used in practice in order to reveal the gendered motives of an institution and their unavoidable

consequences (Mackay and Chappell, 2010). It examines how the structure, in other words the authority, manipulates the agency, the actors – who in this study will be mothers with children – through formal rules such as family-friendly measures and informal rules such as culture and socially constructed perspectives. Finally, this paper also demonstrates New Institutionalism Theory's main weaknesses, including that the theory does not take into consideration the importance of flat structures within institutions, whereby workers are given a voice in decision-making processes.

Historical Background

New Institutionalism is the study of various schools of institutionalism, which focus on the pressure imposed by both formal and informal rules within institutions. It is composed of a number of variants, including the Rational Choice Institutionalists, the Historical Institutionalists, the Organizational Institutionalists and the Sociological Institutionalists. Although these four schools have different opinions on New Institutionalism, they all believe in the existence of formal and informal institutions (North, 1990), which are 'humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction' (North, 1990, p. 3) through the 'normative system of informal and internalised rules' (Levi, 1990, p. 409). However, the issue of structure and agency, in other words the relationship between the institution and the individual, remains an ongoing debate within the different schools of institutionalism, on which they all have distinctive arguments (Hall and Taylor, 1996). Most of the New Institutionalist schools argue that power has the ability to privilege some groups over others (Lowndes, 1996). Most of them emphasize that those in power are authorized to amend the 'rules of the game' in order to increase their own political benefits while weakening the power of their institution's competitors (Pierson, 2004).

Unfortunately, to date, New Institutionalism has largely ignored the association between gender and institutions (O'Connor et al., 1999). New Institutionalism scholars have failed to recognize the existing broad feminist literature about gendered political power and relate it to theory. This means that women have not yet been blended into the political power of institutions (Squires, 2007; Krook, 2009; McBride and Mazur, 2010; Outshoorn and Kantola, 2007). Consequently, any prospective role of gender dynamics within institutional processes has been neglected. Feminists' institutionalism has largely criticized New Institutionalism, stating that it should be scrutinized through a gendered lens in order to bring new visions to those who are blind to the institutions' political gender issues.

When institutions are gendered, this means that the constructed meanings of masculinity and femininity are ingrained in their daily political life (Kenney, 1996). The effects of both formal and informal institutions on gender are a common interest among feminists. They investigate the significance of informal norms and agreements (Krook and Mackay, 2011). Feminists argue that New Institutionalism scholars miss the differing effects on men and women brought about by the norms, rules, policies and laws imposed by the institutions (Mackay et al., 2010). They use their gender-biased power to advocate 'appropriate' masculine and feminine behaviour for men and women within the institution (Chappell, 2002, 2006).

Feminists argue that it is important to acknowledge the gender regimes that exist within institutions, and the importance of change in the formation of gender relations within them, in order to redesign continuity and change (Lovenduski, 2011; Waylen, 2011). Several debates have been ongoing among feminists on the roles of structure and agency in the political life of institutions. So far, it has been acknowledged that they are both gendered (Mackay et al., 2010). When New Institutionalism is scrutinized through a gendered lens, this leads to a better understanding of the active connection "between gendered institutional architects, gendered institutionalized subjects and gendered institutional environments where" the agency, that is the individual strategizers, creates instinctive action while reassuring self-benefits (Hay and Wincott, 1998, p. 955).

New institutionalism ignores the gendered power within institutions (Mackay et al., 2010). Feminists enlighten us about the operation of the institutions' gendered power dynamics regarding inclusion and exclusion (Kenny, 2007). They illuminate for us the ways in which institutions welcome changes for member while at the same time disadvantage newcomers (Kenney, 1996). Several arguments have been going on among feminists about the roles of structure and agency within institutions. Thus far, the fact that they are both gendered has been acknowledged (Mackay et al., 2010).

The next section deals with the theory of structuration, being the institution, and agency, being the workers. It elaborates on the connectivity between these two bodies, which manipulate each other through their own repetitive actions.

Structuration and Agency

According to the theory of structuration, the study of social sciences concerns ordered social practices across space and time. Therefore, it excludes both the experiences of actors and any type of social totality (Moore, 2011). Human social activities are not introduced by social actors but are created through their own repetitive actions. In turn,

agents recreate environments that enable these activities (Giddens, 1984, p. 2). 'Society only has form, and that form only has effects on people, in so far as structure is produced and reproduced in what people do' (Giddens and Pierson, 1998, p. 77). In structuration theory (presented in *The Constitution of Society*), Giddens (1984) observes how the social context can influence individuals, who in turn can manipulate it back themselves. The theory examines how the structure, the institution, agency and employees influence each other as well as trying to resolve the overall theoretical dichotomy regarding micro/macro, subjective/objective contradictions (Moore, 2011). It also examines the ways in which the individual matches the notions of social systems; in other words, their institutions, societies and cultures at large. According to Giddens (1984), systems refer to the repeated actions of society per se, 'enduring cycles of reproduced relations' (Giddens, 1984, p. 131).

Agency and structure cannot be perceived as two different concepts but are considered to be mutually related, defined as two separate characteristics of social action: 'the structuring of social relations across time and space, in virtue of the duality of structure' (Giddens, 1984, p. 376). The theory postulates that agency and structure are in fact in an interwined relationship. This means that the repetitive actions of the agents generate the structure. This is because the structure, in other words the people ruling within the institution, are also deeply imbued with beliefs and norms constructed by the agents: society itself. Having said that, the structure that is created is different from that of the agents, since the agent affects the structure that in turn influences the agents' actions (Moore, 2011). This is referred to as the duality of structure (Giddens, 1979, 1981), and is comprised of the actors who engage in both social action and interaction, and the rules, resources and social relationships that are performed over and over again in social interaction (Cohen, 1987).

According to Giddens, there exist three classifications within social systems. These are: signification, which is meaning created through language; legitimation, which generates morality through norms, values and standards; and domination, which generates power through the control of resources. These are interconnected, while mobilizing and reinforcing each other. For example, 'gender-role conflict' stems from legitimation, which reflects society's belief in the division of labour, based on domination andatriarchy (Moore, 2011). In this way, the agency in general welcomes the decisions taken by the structure since this is the way they have been nurtured to believe things should be done: who should take on roles such as motherly roles, caring roles. Structures are resources, rules, traditions, institutions, morality and socially constructed beliefs about how to do things that make up their own tandards. These are not static, however, but dynamic, since they can be ignored, substituted or reproduced differently. Nevertheless, there may be a growing population that refuses to recognize these rules,

and this population makes up a segment of the agency. The theory ascertains that social agents are controlled by structures, which are hence created and recreated by that act. This means that people – social agents – do not construct systems or cultures but 'produce or transform them, remaking what is already made in the continuity of praxis' (Giddens, 1984, p. 71).

Although agents may be intelligent, they may still be controlled by the socially constructed beliefs created by structures (Kimmerling and Moore, 1997; Thompson, 1989; Swingewood, 1991). These social forces may be evident when the agents decide to ignore social rules. Here, people may react angrily towards those who do not obey the socially constructed rules and beliefs (Garfinkel, 1984). In this way, society's expectations outline the rules and regulations of how normal people are to behave; in other words, they become part of what structures society (Gauntlett, 2002). The process of structuration is generated through three key scales, consisting of 'unacknowledged conditions of action', which are socially constructed rules and regulations ingrained in society; 'the action itself', where the agents act according to these rules; and 'the unintended consequences of the action', which cannot be changed. These dimensions create consistent patterns, but if they are rejected by society they change their course and create new practices that stem from diverse values and cultures (Cohen, 1987).

The next section describes how New Institutionalism Theory can be used to analyse the institution through a gendered lens. This is extremely important because society still perceives men and women as different from each other – each having distinctive gender norms and following a gendered division of labour.

New Institutionalism Theory through a Gendered Lens

Gender is socially constructed and looked upon as being part of the 'logic of appropriateness'. It is therefore difficult to detect in institutions (Chappell, 2006; March and Olsen, 1989). It is vitally important to sense the bias present within institutions and reveal the gendered institutional regulations and instruments that are affecting gender (Mackay, Kenny, and Chappell, 2010). This is important because it will assist in the development of theory on gender and institutions when researchers are able to distinguish and analyse formal and informal rules, norms and practices through mapping. This will certainly determine the formation of gender within institutions (Lovenduski, 2011).

Gendered dynamics in institutional analysis can be identified through discursive methodologies (Kenny, 2013). It is therefore important to carefully examine both the formal and informal intentions of gendered institutions (Mackay, Kenny, and Chappell, 2010). A thorough investigation of the formal written rules included in collective agreements is required because certain clauses that appear to be beneficial on paper may in practice prove to be disadvantageous. An example is the family-friendly measures offered by the University of Malta to a segment of its employees – administrative, technical and industrial staff. These might negatively affect a marginalized group of workers, such as women.

Informal rules are more difficult to detect in research studies. It is therefore recommended to conduct in-depth and comprehensive qualitative studies (Chappell and Waylen, 2013). In-depth interviews are vitally important for determining the reasons why, for example, a certain category of women find it hard to progress in their careers. Why are they earning less than their colleagues in other groups and end up living on meagre incomes and later retiring on unsustainable pensions?
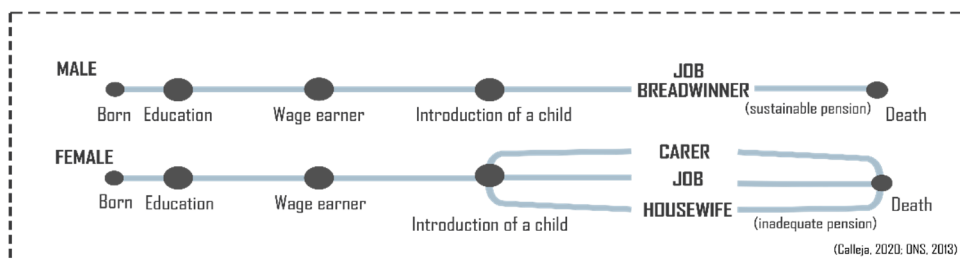

Figure 2: The Impact of Human Capital and Culture

Recent researchers have adopted other methodological approaches from the social sciences, including institutional ethnography and participant observation (Chappell and Waylen, 2013). These two methods are appropriate to analyse what occurs between gender and formal and informal regulations. However, these two methods may not prove realistic in the sense that most researchers do not have all the necessary time and resources on hand, and some research locations or data may not always be available (Bjarnegård, 2013).

Case studies will in general limit findings; nevertheless, they can still detect common fundamental mechanisms that can be further scrutinized in other contexts (Mackay, Kenny, and Chappell, 2010). So much so that these fundamental issues can only be recognized in single case studies where one can easily observe the informal and formal gendered rules in action (Kenny, 2013). Case studies produce results which, although

they may be limited to a certain extent, can still be used in other settings (Pierson, 2004).

The everchanging relationship between gender and institutions over time can be determined by using a historical approach. The longer the period the better, especially in the case of new institutions which are still in their structuring process. Such an approach can identify how modern institutions are deeply imbued with socially constructed beliefs that may welcome some changes while restricting others (Mackay, 2009; Chappell, 2011; Kenny, 2013). As a matter of fact, society in general is still filled with perceptions that influence people's actions. For example, mothers tend to engage in low-earning jobs that enable them to work reduced hours whilst hoping to 'benefit' from family-friendly measures. Fathers, however, choose jobs that pay higher wages. Most mothers choose, or are rather constrained, to swap their profession to work part-time and focus more on their families' needs. This, unfortunately, is detrimental to their careers, while men who become fathers concentrate more on their jobs, which leads them to a smooth career.

The next section explains how New Institutionalism Theory can be used to map the collective agreements, policies, measures and protocols adopted exclusively at the University of Malta in order to support the reasons behind gender discrimination that impedes women with children from advancing in their careers.
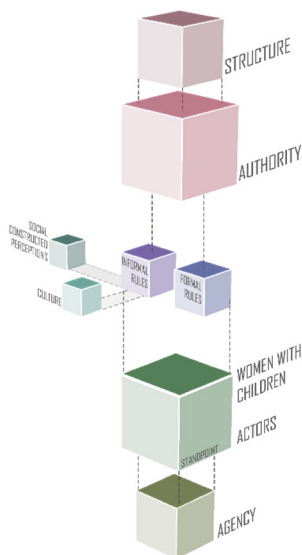

Figure 2: Inspired by Rankin (2017).

New Institutionalism Theory in Practice

New Institutionalism provides researchers with mechanisms that, if used properly, can reveal the gendered motives of an institution and their unavoidable consequences (Mackay and Chappell, 2010). The theory begins from the epistemic assumption that there always exists a certain amount of bias in data because it is socially constructed (Smith, 1999). This is actually the truth, since the world is enveloped with beliefs that instruct us to follow certain rules and regulations. The theory starts out by examining the ways in which institutions manipulate agency – actors' conduct – through policies, rules and norms. These 'bring about or resist change in institutions' (Mackay and Chappell, 2010, p. 1). It therefore aids researchers in examining how actors/employees working in an institution are manipulated by the structure's actions, which are referred to as centralized policymakers. The decisions, policies, norms and measures they proclaim are known as 'ruling relations' (Mackay and Chappell, 2010, p. 1). These ruling relations are prompted by actors from a 'standpoint'. However, these may not always sincerely support the needs of employees (Rankin, 2017) since decision-makers do not always understand the real needs of workers who are ranked in different roles. Institutions not only divide employees socially but treat them differently from each other (Best, 2005) on the basis of gender, nationality, sector, age and caring responsibilities (Cutajar, 2009). This treatment can only generate discrimination, 'exploitation and/or exclusion which can lead to marginalisation' (Young, 2002, p. 225).

When New Institutionalism is applied through a gendered lens, it begins by primarily localizing individuals within the institution – those in power. It also examines the workers' familiarity with the procedures, practices and measures at their workplace – basically all the formal and informal mechanisms that influence their behaviour and decisions taken at work (Smith, 1987). The research study's goal is to detect the junctures of a 'problematic' that are present within the institution. Put simply, the research aims to elicit whether employees are driven to expect one thing while, in reality, experiencing a completely different outcome to that which was promised (Rankin, 2017). For example, it might examine the gendered impact of certain policies; for instance, flexitime that, on paper, might look beneficial but in practice does not permit mothers to juggle a full-time job together with their family responsibilities. Therefore, they end up reducing their working hours or working part time, which is a catastrophe for their career progression. Policies may at first sight seem to care but in actual fact they might be unconsciously biased against a marginalized group, such as women. The research aims to provide proof of how the work of individuals is socially organized (Smith, 2006). In this way, the institution's structure can be scrutinized

through a gendered lens and, most important of all, the gendered issue within its structure can be revealed (Mackay and Chappell, 2010).

Up to this point, this paper has depicted the advantages that New Institutionalism can offer. However, it is also important to note that this theory has its own weaknesses and therefore, in order to obtain accurate results, it is important to combine it with other relevant theories.

New Institutionalism's Weaknesses

When used on its own, New Institutionalism can present certain weaknesses and it is therefore advisable to combine it with other theories in order to fully understand the nature of higher education institutions (Cai and Mehari, 2015).

One of the most common weaknesses is that the theory in general does not pay attention to the role of human agency in institutional changes. This weakness can be combined with 'sense making' – because only people can work out the reasons for complex situations (Pietilä, 2014). It can also be combined with the actor's perspective – by which this theory stresses the importance of actors in decision-making. This could refer to flat structures within institutions where the actors are given a voice, especially in the institution's decision-making process (Lepori, Usher, and Montauti, 2013). Unfortunately, the University's structure is hierarchical rather than flat, and therefore most of the decisions are taken by higher management levels, mainly academics who do not understand the needs of mothers working in other sectors of the university besides those in academia. We can explain this through *social theories*, in other words deficiency and structural theories, which relate to the socially constructed perceptions within institutions that only men are competent in leadership. This is referred to as hegemonic masculinity and is basically passed on from one generation to the next through culture (Jackson and O'Callaghan, 2009). This again is widely present at the University since the majority of academics continue to be men – and these are the key decision-makers. Additionally, an *instrumental perspective* can be employed; this is when institutions can be used as a means to achieve explicit goals. This can give rise to conflicts between the actors themselves, who are treated differently according to their interests, values and norms (Larsen, 2001).

The second weakness is that little attention is paid to the technical and resource environment. This weakness can be limited by combining it with *cultural and socio-economic factors* – culture does not only emanate from a micro-level perspective – stemming from the institutional background but also originating from outside the

institution itself. Culture an also be derived from a macro-level perspective – through the country's cultural and socio-economic characteristics (Heinze and Knill, 2008). Most of the policies at the University, both informal and formal, are based on norms derived from cultural and structural expectations. These inflict bias against women who are striving to achieve career progression. Unfortunately, these women encounter obstacles in their way which prove detrimental to their careers. A *globalization perspective* is also valuable; importance should also be given to the economic and technical impacts of globalization – the influx of foreign workers employed by the institution, as well as technological developments (Levin, 2001, 2006; Stromquist, 2007). *World system theory and dependency theory* is also important. This theory stresses the division of labour in countries which is influenced by the global political economy (Rhoades and Sporn, 2002).

The third weakness is that New Institutionalism focuses on only one institutional field. In order to limit this weakness, it is best to combine it with *allomorphism*, which describes how institutions are rooted in various institutional fields (Vaira, 2004; Watson, 2009). However, as already mentioned, case studies can still identify common causal instruments, which can be further examined against other backgrounds (Mackay, Kenny, and Chappell, 2010).

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that New Institutionalism can be very helpful in detecting institutional sexism in higher education institutions – in my case, the University of Malta – which is very often taken for granted and accepted by actors working within an institution. The agency, which refers to actors, are manipulated by the structures within the same institution. These refer to the ruling relations that discriminate against marginalized groups of workers, such as women with children. The investigation therefore takes its point of departure in a particular standpoint – from a marginalized group – and thoroughly explores the formal and informal rules and regulations. These formal rules and regulations are very often set up in collective agreements, while the informal ones can be discreet and difficult to detect. Policies imposed by the structure may appear advantageous while, in practice, they may perpetuate exploitation and discrimination. New Institutionalism Theory may contain certain weaknesses if used on its own, however. It is therefore recommended to combine it with other theories in order to obtain more accurate results and fully understand the nature of higher education institutions.

Acknowledgments

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Skapande verkstad (by Emma Krantz)

Moving Beyond the Gender Binary in Responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV): Protection of Male and LGBTI+ Victims

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Abstract

This study analyses policies at the UN level to illustrate how gender has been conceptualized from the perspective of cis-gender women and how this has had an impact on policy responses to conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). It is undeniable that the phenomenon of CRSV has been increasingly discussed and documented by the international community. During the past three decades, there have been positive developments in terms of treating CRSV as a crime under international law. This crime has developed from regarding such acts as attacks on women's 'honour' to understanding it as the infringement of personal autonomy and rights of persons. With the efforts of the international feminist movement and ongoing discussions amongst the international community on sexual violence, the understanding of CRSV as an inevitable result of conflicts has finally changed. It is now largely understood as a crime that is linked to power relations and often used as a tactic or weapon of war. Also, the description of the crime itself has moved beyond acts of wartime rape with the introduction of CRSV as an umbrella term that includes diversified forms of sexual violence during conflict. However, while the voices of CRSV victims and their needs have increasingly begun to be heard by the international community, the policy responses to CRSV mainly concern the protection of cis-gender women, while failing to adequately address the victimization faced by men, boys and LGBTI+ individuals. This has resulted in two important challenges: 1) An over-emphasis on the binary of men as aggressive perpetrators and women as passive victims of conflict has perpetuated the traditional gender roles and ignored the agency of women during conflict; 2) CRSV-related crimes committed against cis-hetero males and LGBTI+ victims have

not been adequately addressed and in fact have been made invisible by the international community.

The first WPS Resolution was announced in 2000 and half of these resolutions deal with sexual violence, but no reference to men and boys as victims was made until 2013. LGBTI+ victims have never been explicitly mentioned in any of the Security Council Resolutions, although there is a slow-motion change towards understanding their vulnerabilities and victimization. To overcome this challenge and provide a comprehensive understanding of CRSV, this study suggests that the international community should take an inclusive approach to gender and incorporate a masculinities lens into their policy responses, alongside the feminist perspective. The masculinities approach will help us to understand the complex and unequal gendered power relations that exist beyond the traditional gender binaries (men vs. women, perpetrator vs. victim) and to build a more inclusive concept of gender through acknowledging the victimization faced by subordinated masculinities, such as in the case of cis-hetero-male and LGBTI+ victims of CRSV. Furthermore, it will also prevent the perpetuation of traditional gender roles by accepting that there can be non-female victims of such violence and that women are not solely the ultimate passive victims of conflicts.

Keywords: Gender, conflict-related sexual violence, WPS Resolutions, masculinities, LGBTI+

Introduction

Positive changes have occurred over the past three decades in the treatment of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) as a crime under international law. From being considered an attack on a woman's 'honour', the crime has evolved to include the violation of the right to bodily integrity. The establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY)[1] and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR)[2] during the 1990s played a significant role in that regard. Before these tribunals, the Nuremberg and Tokyo tribunals had evidence of CRSV, but they both failed to include such crimes in their indictments (Bluen, 2016, p. 215). The ICTY and ICTR addressed CRSV in their indictments and handed down landmark

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[1] The UN Security Council adopted Security Council Resolution S/RES/827 (1993) to formally establish the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

[2] The UN Security Council adopted Security Council Resolution S/RES/955 (1994) to formally establish the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

case decisions.[3] The valuable legacy of both tribunals was to acknowledge CRSV as a war crime (Bluen, 2016, p. 214). While this may be considered a major success, both tribunals have failed to include CRSV in their statutes as a crime on its own, with diversified forms, as it takes place in practice (Ginn, 2013, p. 574). The International Criminal Court (ICC), which was founded in 1998, was a step forward for CRSV since the statute of their tribunal specifically referred to CRSV as a crime on its own with a variety of forms (Rome Statute, 1998, art. 7 & 8).

International law has progressed in tackling CRSV, and gender mainstreaming efforts in the UN have also intensified since the 1970s (Cuenca, 2015, p.917). Efforts in the UN and landmark case decisions by the international tribunals have successfully paved the way for policy development in this area. The well-known Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Resolutions are an example of this. These Resolutions have addressed CRSV, but they have largely followed the 'male as the perpetrator' and 'female as the ultimate victim' approach. Such an approach considers women as the sole victims of CRSV, while completely ignoring the victimization of other groups, such as cis-hetero males and LGBTI+ individuals. Until 2013, the Resolutions did not acknowledge male victims of CRSV (Dolan, 2014) and, to date, there has been no reference to LGBTI+ victims. At the same time, the strong focus on the victimization of women in such policies has ignored the diverse roles and agencies of women during conflict and risks reinforcing traditional gender roles. This article seeks to explain how CRSV has developed in international legal documents in order to illustrate the shift in the approach towards such crimes. It also explains how such crimes have been handled by the WPS Resolutions, which constitute a global policy response to CRSV. It further provides two key criticisms in that regard: 1) The overemphasis on the binary of men as aggressive perpetrators and women as passive victims of conflict has reinforced traditional gender roles and ignored the agency of women during conflicts; 2) CRSV-related crimes committed against cis-hetero males and LGBTI+ individuals have not been adequately addressed; rather, such crimes have been made invisible by the international community.

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[3] Some of the landmark case decisions on CRSV are the *Celebici* case, the *Foca* Case, the *Akayesu* case and the *Nyiramasuhuko* case.

The development of CRSV under international criminal law

The international humanitarian law (IHL) that provides the rules for armed conflict began developing during the 20th century, particularly with the adoption of the Hague Conventions (1907) and the Geneva Conventions (1949). IHL treaties have been criticized for overlooking CRSV because they do not consider them as having the same gravity as other crimes. Furthermore, they lack clear and explicit wording on the prohibition of CRSV (Gaggioli, 2014). These criticisms are credible, as outlined in this section. However, at the same time, the significant developments in this field cannot be ignored. Until the adoption of the US army regulation Lieber Code (1863),[4] CRSV was not codified in the legal framework concerning conflicts. There was no specific reference to CRSV under art. 46 of the Hague Convention (1907). It merely involved the protection of 'family honour and rights', which does not consider the crime within the context of violation of a personal right, but rather of the right of the family, which has no proper definition and is vague.

The Geneva Conventions that were drafted later provided a way forward for addressing CRSV in conflict. The commonly cited Article 3 did not explicitly refer to wartime rapes or CRSV, but involved '*cruel treatment*' and '*outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment*' (Geneva Convention IV, 1949). Article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Conventions addressed CRSV directly, but in a traditional way: '*women shall be especially protected against any attack on their honour, in particular against rape, enforced prostitution, or any form of indecent assault*' (Geneva Convention IV, 1949). The wording of this article is problematic because it considers CRSV as an attack on a woman's honour, which is a subjective term. Furthermore, the article only refers to women and completely ignores the experiences of men, boys and LGBTI+ individuals in general. Also, CRSV is not listed under the 'grave breaches' in the Fourth Geneva Convention, which would allow its universal application whether or not a particular state has signed the convention. The fact that rape was not listed as a grave breach at that time indicates that the decision-makers did not consider it as grievous as other crimes.

The Geneva Conventions were later extended with the addition of two additional protocols, the first on international conflicts and the second on non-international ones. Article 76 of Additional Protocol I (1977) placed special emphasis on women and provided that they shall be: '*protected in particular against rape, forced prostitution and*

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[4] The Lieber Code listed rape as a war crime under Articles 44 and 47.

any other form of indecent assault'. On the other hand, Article 4(2)(e) of Additional Protocol II (1977) stated the following: '*[o]utrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment, rape, enforced prostitution and any form of indecent assault*'. The additional protocols were a way forward in relation to the crime of CRSV and, although there was a special emphasis on Article 76, the rest of the articles did not point out any specific gender in their wording. Global discussions regarding CRSV have been influenced by the atrocities committed during the genocide in Rwanda and in the rape camps that were established during the conflicts in ex-Yugoslavia (Baaz and Stern, 2013).

When the conflicts in Yugoslavia and Rwanda began, details about the incidents of rape and cases of CRSV were released by the media. This led to awareness-raising on the issue internationally and increased pressure for justice. The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) was established in 1993 and then the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) was established in 1994. Both tribunals included rape as a crime against humanity in their statutes. The cases prosecuted in ICTY (such as the *Celebici* case (1997) and the *Foca* case (2001)) as well as the cases in ICTR (such as the *Akayesu* case (1998) and the *Nyiramasuhuko* case (2012)) had a great impact on the WPS Resolutions on sexual violence and on the Rome Statute that was adopted in 1998. The Rome Statute was a way forward for prosecuting CRSV since articles 7 and 8 referred to the different forms of CRSV: '*Rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity*'. In addition, the ICTY and ICTR's jurisdiction was limited to their territories. The ICC's recognition of CRSV in its statute has provided the necessary tool for the crime to be addressed globally, in different territories (Karkera, 2004). Finally, the definition itself is formulated in gender-neutral language that demonstrates a shift away from other international documents that define CRSV as a crime of which only women can be the victims, to accepting the fact that anyone can be a victim, regardless of their gender.

The progress in the ICC developed in parallel with the efforts within UN mechanisms to incorporate gender mainstreaming into all levels of decision-making. These efforts have resulted in the adoption of the WPS Resolutions that are explained in the next section. The WPS Resolutions led to several achievements in terms of progress on enhancing the protection and participation of women living in conflict or post-conflict settings and providing a global policy to tackle CRSV.

Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Resolutions

A) Development of the WPS Resolutions

The WPS Resolutions were developed alongside the gender mainstreaming efforts that were introduced in the UN during the 1970s. General Assembly Resolution 3010[5] declared 1975 as 'International Women's Year' and the first World Conference on Women was held in Mexico City. This was the same year that paved the way for a new era of global efforts for the advancement of women's rights (United Nations, 1975). Resolution 3010 emphasized equality, the full participation of women in development policies and the role of women in peace efforts. The first World Conference established the 'UN Decade for Women', which is now accepted as a major turning point for the international women's movement (Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2002). After the 1975 Conference, four other World Conferences on Women were organized: Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985), Beijing (1995) and New York (2000).

The concept of gender mainstreaming under the UN mechanisms predominantly emerged from the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which held a high-level panel discussion in 1997[6] on this issue. According to the ECOSOC, gender mainstreaming is defined as:

> Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality. (UN Report, 1999, p. 23)

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[5] The three objectives mentioned in UNGA Resolution 3010 were: '*to promote equality between men and women, to ensure the full integration of women in the total development effort and to recognize the importance of women's increasing contribution to the development of friendly relations and co-operation among states and to the strengthening of world peace.*'

[6] The panel discussion was held on 9 July 1997 with the participation of key institutions such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Associate Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme and the Executive Director of the World Food Programme. The key discussion concerned mainstreaming the gender perspective in all UN policies and programming; UN 'Report of the Economic and Social Council for the Year 1997' (A/52/3/Rev.1), p. 23.

The idea of gender mainstreaming has spread both internationally and regionally, via the institutions and instruments of organizations such as the UN, the EU[7] and the Council of Europe, and has become part of the legal framework as well as policymaking and strategies. When considering the improvements regarding gender equality, it is important for the purposes of this research to understand what gender mainstreaming means for UN mechanisms, how it has been conceptualized and what kind of tools were developed to respond to gender inequalities. As gender mainstreaming has paved the way for the WPS Resolutions, these are discussed below.

Charlesworth argues that the definition of gender mainstreaming provided by ECOSOC is simultaneously too wide and too narrow (Charlesworth, 2011, p. 29). It is wide because it states that the different implications for women and men should be assessed while planning an action. However, it does not provide any information about how or in what context this should be done. But Charlesworth also considers it too narrow because gender mainstreaming disregards all of the complex forms of gendered power relations and presumes that the equal treatment of men and women will end inequality (Charlesworth, 2011, pp. 29–30). Furthermore, UN documents use the word 'gender' as though it is a synonym for 'woman', which also constitutes a problematic approach (Charlesworth, 2011, pp. 30–31). Gender refers to the social construction of maleness and femaleness. However, assuming that gender only refers to 'woman' reproduces the essentialism of femaleness, and disregards the experiences of male identities as well as the unequal gendered power relations that construct the patriarchal system because it narrows gender inequality into women's access to certain rights. Lastly, this assumption also makes diverse male gender identities invisible, as though there is only one category of maleness (Charlesworth, 2011, p. 30).

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Resolutions, which mostly deal with gender within the conflict or post-conflict context, reflect the understanding of gender discussed above. Currently, there are ten WPS Resolutions in total and, overall, they all endorse a woman-centred approach (El-Bushra, 2017, p. 2). The WPS Resolutions put forward four pillars: protection, prevention, participation, and relief and recovery. Protection covers the protection of women and girls from CRSV and gender-based violence; prevention refers to providing a gendered approach to avoiding the recurrence of conflict; participation means the full and equal participation of women at all levels of decision-making; and relief is connected to the rights of survivors and their recovery

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[7] The Gender Equality Strategy emphasizes gender mainstreaming throughout the document and states that a gender equality perspective shall be incorporated in all policy areas; European Commission, 'A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025' (Adopted 5 March 2020).

(Peace Women, 2013). Overall, the strongest emphasis of the resolutions is the protection pillar (Kirby and Shephard, 2016, pp. 379–380).

B) WPS Resolutions and CRSV

Half of the WPS resolutions deal with CRSV,[8] while the other half focus on empowering women through their role in peace negotiations,[9] women's participation in peacebuilding and peacekeeping[10] and the impact of different violations on women and girls.[11] These are mainly resolutions that deal with sexual violence, thus highlighting that sexual violence has been a primary concern for the UN.

The resolutions that deal with sexual violence began with Resolution 1820 (2008), in which women and girls are considered to be targets of sexual violence and it is identified as a tactic of war to '*humiliate, dominate, instil fear in, disperse and/or forcibly relocate civilian members of a community or ethnic group*' (Resolution 1820, 2008, preamble). Resolution 1820 stresses that the protection of civilians should focus on women and children and that effective protection mechanisms shall be established in order to protect them in places such as refugee and internally displaced persons camps (Resolution 1820, 2008, preamble). It also calls upon all parties to stop sexual violence immediately and to protect women and girls from all forms of sexual violence (Resolution 1820, 2008, para.15). Additionally, it adds that rape and other forms of sexual violence can be considered a crime against humanity or may be considered an act of genocide and that there shall be no amnesty for crimes related to sexual violence during conflict-resolution periods (Resolution 1820, 2008, para. 4). The Resolution emphasizes that women and girls are subject to such crimes (Resolution 1820, 2008, para. 4) and that there shall be special protection measures in order to ensure they can access assistance provided on an equal basis (Resolution 1820, 2008, para. 9, 10, 15),

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[8] The following are the five WPS Resolutions that deal with CRSV: UNSC Res 1820 (19 June 2008) UN Doc S/RES/1820, UNSC Res 1888 (30 September 2009), UN Doc S/RES/1888 (2009), UNSC Res 1960 (16 December 2010) S/RES/1960 (2010), UNSC Res 2106 (24 June 2013) S/RES/2106, UNSC Res 2467 (23 June 2019) S/RES/2467 (2019).

[9] The following are the WPS Resolutions on women in peace negotiations: UNSC Res 1325 (31 October 2000) UN Doc S/RES/1325, UNSC Res 2493 (29 October 2019) UN Doc S/RES/2493, UNSC Res 1889 (5 October 2009) UN Doc S/RES/1889.

[10] UNSC Res 1889 (5 October 2009) UN Doc S/RES/1889 is the relevant WPS Resolution on women's participation in peacebuilding and peacekeeping.

[11] UNSC Res 2122 (18 October 2013) UN Doc S/RES/2122 is the relevant WPS Resolution on the impact of violations against women and girls.

and it also requires the evacuation of women and girls in cases where there is an imminent threat of sexual violence (UNSC Res 1820, 2008, para. 3).

Resolution 1888 (2009) was adopted one year later and requested the Secretary-General to establish a team of experts to assist governments in tackling/addressing/responding to sexual violence. The Resolution also led to the establishment of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. This Office works as a coordination body for all stakeholders seeking to end sexual violence in conflict and enhance advocacy efforts in that regard (Resolution 1888, 2009, para. 4). The wording used in Resolution 1888 to describe the vulnerable groups who are primarily at risk from sexual violence and need special protection is slightly different from that in Resolution 1820, with the wording 'women and girls' being replaced with 'women and children' (Resolution 1888, 2009, para. 12, 25, 26). This might be interpreted as inclusive in terms of referring to children with diverse gender identities. However, it should be noted that there is no explicit reference to diverse gender identities within the text of the Resolution.

The next Resolution that predominantly focuses on sexual violence in conflict is Resolution 1960, which was adopted one year later, in 2010. This Resolution called for a monitoring mechanism to be established by the Secretary-General to analyse CRSV during armed conflict and in post-conflict contexts. Furthermore, it requested the Secretary-General to regularly analyse CRSV and publish annual reports (UNSC Res 1960, para. 8). A similar approach to the previous one was followed by this Resolution by referring to 'women and children' as the primary groups at risk from sexual violence, with no explicit reference to children of different gender identities (UNSC Res 1960, preamble).

However, a different approach was provided in Resolution 2106, adopted in 2013, with regards to identifying the victims. This acknowledged the fact that men and boys can also be victims of CRSV. Resolution 2106 states in its preamble that: '*Noting with concern that sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations disproportionately affects women and girls, as well as groups that are particularly vulnerable or may be specifically targeted, while also affecting men and boys*' (UNSC Res 2106, 2013, para. 3). This was the first time that a WPS Resolution had acknowledged that men and boys can also be the victims of sexual violence. However, the resolution failed to comment further on this issue in the sections that followed, and continued to emphasize women as the victims of sexual violence.[12]

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[12] UNSC Res 2106 para. 3 mentions the impunity for crimes committed against women and children, under para. 17, women and children who are abducted are presented as the groups most vulnerable to

Finally, the most recent resolution that deals with sexual violence is Resolution 2467, adopted in 2019. It reaffirms that men and boys can also be victims of CRSV, along with women and girls. However, men and boys are mentioned in only one paragraph (UNSC Res 2467, 2019, para. 28), whereas the sexual violence committed against 'women and children' and 'women and girls' and their needs are addressed throughout the document.[13] Although women and girls do require specific attention when it comes to CRSV, such documents should also begin to address the needs of men and boys so as to be able to see a significant change in the policy. This Resolution acknowledges gender inequalities as the root cause of violence (UNSC Res 2467, 2019, preamble), expresses concern over widespread sexual violence against women and children (UNSC Res 2467, 2019, para. 5) and urges member states to strengthen their efforts to grant victims access to justice (UNSC Res 2467, 2019, para. 15). It also acknowledges that victims may be women, men or children (UNSC Res 2467, 2019, para. 28, 32), successfully provides a survivor-based approach that prioritizes the needs and rights of the victims as a response to sexual violence (UNSC Res 2467, 2019, preamble) and calls upon member states to assist the survivors of sexual violence in a non-discriminatory manner (UNSC Res 2467, 2019, para. 16).[14] As a further positive addition to previous resolutions, it raises concerns about children born as a result of sexual violence and urges member states to provide equal rights to all persons impacted by sexual violence, including children born as a result (UNSC Res 2467, 2019, para. 18). Overall, although there have been some changes since the adoption of Resolution 2106, the WPS Resolutions addressing sexual violence have focused almost exclusively on women as the victims of sexual violence and men as the perpetrators of such criminal acts. This has resulted in the victimization faced by cis-hetero men and LGBTI+ individuals being ignored, while reinforcing traditional binary gender roles.

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sexual violence and under para 20, women are regarded as being one of the at-risk groups for HIV infection as a result of sexual violence.

[13] Women and children, or women and girls, are represented as the victims of sexual violence subsequently under the preamble, para. 5, para. 15, para. 16 and para. 18.

[14] The resolution states in para. 16 that preventing and responding to sexual violence in conflict must be non-discriminatory.

Critique of the WPS Resolutions on CRSV: Traditional gender roles reinforced

Until Security Council Resolution 2106 was introduced, the Security Council did not acknowledge the fact that there are also male victims of sexual violence. The WPS Resolutions are mainly shaped by focusing on hegemonic masculinities during conflict, which portray men as the perpetrators and women as the ever-vulnerable victims of conflict who require protection (Schulz, 2020, p. 2). Hegemonic masculinities refer to the most powerful in society, who are at the top of the hierarchy. Specifically, a heterosexual cis-gender man who is culturally acknowledged and has institutional frameworks at hand by which to exert his power. The military, famous film actors and fantasy figures are all examples provided by Connell to explain this concept (Connell, 1987, pp. 183–184). In short, hegemonic masculinities are based on the understanding of what a 'real man' is in each society. The WPS Resolutions primarily focused on these forms of masculinities; that is, aggressive, dominant and, ultimately, perpetrators. By failing to take into account other types of masculinities that are not essentially violent but, in contrast, are vulnerable to CRSV, the Resolution did not provide a holistic approach. Thus, it reproduced traditional roles for both women and men, because men are referred to solely as aggressive perpetrators and women as vulnerable victims in need of protection (Myrttinen, Khattab and Naujoks, 2017, pp. 105–106). Arguably, it is understandable that the literature has predominantly focused on female victims of such violence because they have long been attacked during conflicts due to their gender (Myrttinen, Khattab and Naujoks, 2017, pp. 105–106). However, it is important to realize that ignoring the victimization of cis-hetero men and LGBTI+ individuals creates a significant gap in the literature and renders their challenges and needs invisible (Grey and Shepherd, 2013). The fact that non-female victims are still seldom discussed at the policymaking level suggests that the current framework enforces heteronormative and binary gender relations.

El-Bushra argues that the WPS Resolutions uphold a women-centred approach in the context of armed conflict (El-Bushra, 2017, p. 2). This women-centred approach, she argues, raised the voices of women and girls who are victimized by sexual violence, pressured the international community for accountability and justice and urged protection of the victims. However, these Resolutions also upheld the stereotypes of women as passive victims, while strengthening the perception of men as perpetrators (El-Bushra, 2017, p. 2). The protection of civilians is thus determined using a gendered approach, an approach that is based on 'taken-for-granted beliefs' about the socially constructed roles of women and men (Carpenter, 2003, p. 663). Women are most often associated with children, and together are they referred to as innocent civilians

who are in need of protection. The symbolic importance of women as the reproducers of society also plays a role in prioritizing their protection and rescue (Nagel, 2019, p. 6). However, the literature illustrates that women living in conflict settings have diverse experiences.

The increasing number of women active in combatant forces worldwide challenges the general understanding of women as passive and innocent victims of war (USAID, 2007, p. 6). Indeed, female combatants were involved in almost 40 percent of the conflicts that took place between 1979 and 2009 (Braithwaite and Ruiz, 2018, p. 1). Apart from being involved in conflicts as active fighters, women may also adopt different roles in combatant forces, such as assisting armed groups as domestic workers, cooks, administrators, informants and suicide bombers (Bouta, Frerks and Bannon, 2004, p. 9). Women may also engage in war crimes and perpetrate criminal actions. For instance, during the Sierra Leone civil war, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) had 25 percent female combatants. Yet, the RUF committed 85.6 percent of all reported rape cases during the conflict. Cohen suggests that the traditional belief in women being peaceful and not engaging in wartime rapes is false in the Sierra Leone context (Cohen, 2013, p. 385). Another example of a conflict setting where women committed CRSV is in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Specifically, a survey conducted in 2010 found that 41 percent of female sexual violence survivors and 10 per cent of male survivors reported that their attackers were female (Cohen, 2013, p. 385). The case of *Nyiramasuhuko* (2012) is another example of women transcending the traditional perception of woman as victim. This case involved the first woman to be tried by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (Buckley-Zistel and Zolkos, 2012, p.1). Nyiramasuhuko was the first woman to be found guilty of CRSV; she was convicted of rape as a crime against humanity, outrages upon personal dignity as a war crime, and for her responsibility as a superior and for encouraging such actions (Buckley-Zistel and Zolkos, 2012, p. 1; Cohen, 2013, p. 410).

Sexual violence against men has occurred in nearly all conflicts in which sexual violence was a feature (Sivakumaran, 2007, p. 255). Cases of CRSV against men and LGBTI+ individuals have occurred in many countries, including Colombia (UN Secretary-General, 2015–2016), Syria (UN Secretary-General, 2015–2016), Rwanda (Di Caro, 2019, pp. 81–82) and Libya (UN Human Rights Council, 2012). Furthermore, it should be noted that individuals with different gender identities and sexual orientations are particularly vulnerable to such violence (Nathwani, 2015, p. 15). Although not only LGBTI+ individuals are targeted for CRSV, people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity may be specifically targeted because they challenge hegemonic masculinity. For instance, sexual violence against men and boys was committed in both detention and non-detention settings in Syria. Anal rape, being forced to rape or

witness rape and electric shocks to the genitals are some examples of that violence (All Survivors Project, 2018, p. 15). Survivors of CRSV in Syria stated during their interviews that, when their gender identity or sexual orientation was revealed, there was a greater likelihood of being targeted by the perpetrators (All Survivors Project, 2018, p. 21). The rights of LGBTI+ individuals were first discussed by the Security Council in 2015 within the context of crimes committed by ISIS in Iraq and Syria (World Bank, 2020, p. 2). However, the vulnerabilities of LGBTI+ individuals, men and boys as the victims of sexual violence have been mentioned in Secretary-General Reports on CRSV published since 2015. Overall, Resolution 2106 described above has been welcomed as a positive development in the field because it recognizes the fact that there can be male victims of such violence. However, there is no reference at all to LGBTI+ individuals or their vulnerabilities anywhere in the Resolution (Margalit, 2018, p. 245).

Dolan argues that this is the result of systemic reluctance to accept that men and boys can be the victims of such violence. The fact that rape has long been understood within a binary and heterosexual context is related to the homophobia that is intrinsic to patriarchy (Dolan, 2014, p. 82). The invisibility around male victimization in sexual violence is a result of the patriarchal understanding of what it means to be a 'real man'. Although the use of sexual violence against men stems from the same power and dominance as that used against women, male victimization is ignored. This is because sexual violence against men is in opposition to the idea of a 'real man' in a patriarchal society. The 'real man' is strong, aggressive, active and heterosexual (Vojdik, 2013, pp. 940–942). Male victims of sexual violence are thus feminized or seen as being gay, so that the idea of hegemonic masculinity will not be harmed by such victimizations. Therefore, when the question 'whose bodies matter?' is asked once again in this context, it is clearly not the ones that may harm the power of hegemonic masculinity (Grey and Shepherd, 2013, pp. 122–125). Therefore, it is necessary for future policymaking in this area to move away from the hegemonic masculinities approach, so as to acknowledge the presence and experiences of all victims and provide better support and protection for them.

Conclusion

CRSV used to be understood as an attack on the 'honour' of women under international humanitarian law, whereas now it is accepted as a grave crime potentially targeting all people, regardless of their gender. Global policy responses have been shaped accordingly in view of this conceptual and practical reimagining of CRSV. Notably, under the WPS Resolutions, CRSV has been one of the thematic areas that is

most comprehensively covered. While this is positive progress, the majority of the WPS Resolutions that have been developed have ignored cis-hetero male victims and the victimization of LGBTI+ individuals. Moreover, they have mostly addressed women alongside children and portrayed them as passive victims who are in need of protection, while men are portrayed as aggressive perpetrators. The WPS Resolutions have upheld hegemonic masculinities and reinforced traditional gender roles by presenting the idea of men vs women, perpetrator vs victim. Although women are certainly in need of protection in many conflict situations, victimhood is not their only status, nor is protection from male perpetuators their sole need. As discussed above, evidence from various conflicts has highlighted that not all women are peaceful agents or passive victims in conflict settings. Indeed, there have been cases where women have been involved in violent acts or where they perform duties within combatant forces. Furthermore, research shows that there is a slow-motion shift in terms of understanding CRSV in gender-neutral terms and acknowledging non-female victims of such crimes. Although this is a worthy improvement, the fact that the WPS Resolutions fail to address diverse gender identities or sexual orientations remains problematic, since these situations and experiences require special consideration and attention.

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Activism and Resistances Against Nonconsensual Pornography: Claiming Visibility in Cyberspace

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Abstract

In the context of image-based sexual abuse, nonconsensual image sharing has been recognized as a form of gender-based violence. The regulatory mechanisms of gender emerge in cyberspace as new ways of othering women and non-normative subjects and maintaining the gender order online, thus revealing an increasingly complex continuum of violence with numerous implications. Particularly, the breach of interpersonal trust, infringement of privacy, and classification of private images as pornography while characterizing the broad spectrum of technology-facilitated gender-based violence restrictively as 'revenge porn', constitute the discursive mechanisms of male homosocial bonds that regulate gender dynamics in cyberspace. This paper focuses on the plurality of acts of resistance and activism against methods that encourage technology-facilitated gender-based violence. Through empirical research and the theoretical lens of cyberfeminism, I examine the emerging dynamics of these resistances from a cyber-(h)activist perspective that allows us to envision a gendered reappropriation of technology, methods capable of disrupting the tech-normative androcentricism.

Keywords: Cyberfeminism, hacktivism, homosociality, revenge porn, technology-facilitated gender-based violence, big tech.

Introduction

Non-consensual intimate image (NCII) abuse or image-based sexual abuse (IBSA) is one of many forms of violence against women and femininities that has emerged along with the digitalized self (Διοτίμα, 2020; Goudsmit, 2017). NCII abuse is erroneously better known as 'revenge porn' and is considered as a modern form of sexual abuse against women. Nonetheless, while 'revenge porn' is rooted in technology misuse, as a form of violence itself it is not new. However, the term 'revenge porn' is both problematic and restrictive in the effort to describe the spectrum of technology-facilitated gender-based violence (Henry and Powell, 2014).

Women and femininities have been suffering exposure and abuse long before social media became the primary tool for communication, information, and participation. At the same time, we can trace the lineage of non-consensual distribution of intimate images to the non-consensual sharing of old-school video tapes, private pictures in the yellow press, and word-of-mouth defamation practices, that draw the outline of a history of abuse against women that has now extended into the digital space offering new harassment opportunities. From a sociological perspective, cyberspace is a reflection of the offline society. Thus, the offline gender role stereotypes and social norms are merely reinscribed onto the digital geographies hence reinforcing and perpetuating gender norms and systemic inequalities.

Despite some limited legal actions and new policies implemented by the tech giants NCII abuse is largely uncontrollable and unpunishable, worldwide. In 2020, during the COVID-19 lockdown, Greece came to learn how deep the 'revenge porn' phenomenon goes with the case of Chatpic.org. (H)activists and reporters stumbled upon a network of mass distribution of non-consensual intimate images/videos of women, child pornography, and photos of LGBTI+ people. According to the research conducted by a team of reporters from *Documento* newspaper on Chatpic.org, 'an average of 10,000 images are being uploaded per day' (Δρίβα, 2021). Greece alone saw a major increase in revenge porn cases as high as 66%, in 2021 (Σιδηροπούλου, 2021). Adding further to the abuse, non-consensual material is tagged with the personal information of the person, such as name and social media accounts, or even home and work addresses, a practice known as doxing. According to the legal scholar Mary Anne Franks:

as many as 10,000 websites feature 'revenge porn', some dedicated solely to this content. These easily accessible, largely anonymous platforms connect profit driven purveyors with voyeuristic consumers. Nearly half of all victims' intimate images were distributed by text message and the rest were distributed through social media, in person, or the internet. (2017, pp. 4–5).

However, along with the excessive outbreak of online gendered violence, there has also been a proliferation of (h)activist resistance using online blogs, social media, and press reports increasing visibility of the abuse that women experience online, and challenging online misogyny and rape culture (Harmer and Lumsden, 2019, pp.10,11).

To begin with, we observe the augmentation of abusive practices online on a global scale due, on the one hand, to the absence of any meaningful legislative regulations and, on the other, to the overwhelmingly powerful hegemonic tech companies. Researchers emphasize the growing gender gap in the tech field – in some areas more than others – and have tried to explain this gap by turning to the social sciences. Less and less percentage of women make it to the end of a purely technological academic curriculum, and even fewer women manage to enter the hands-on male-dominated tech industry, while specialized computer science positions are almost entirely occupied by men. I believe that there is a strong association and an organic link between technology-facilitated gender-based violence and the structural gender gap in the industry. Women who work in male-dominated environments often survive by sacrificing their femininity and becoming 'one of the guys'. Men form relationships, bond and create friendships with other men upholding their privilege and in defending the gender hierarchy, a social relation that Kosofsky Sedgwick (1985) identifies as male homosociality. These homosocial bonds occur in every aspect of the social spectrum, between men who work together, who play online games together and who collaborate for various reasons thus forming intricate groups that, passively or actively, exclude women (Hammaren and Johanson, 2014, p.1). I support that non-consensual pornography is one of the homosocial tools that men use to maintain their bonds and relationships with other men, resulting in the sustainability of a gendered hierarchy and the privileged status for men that supports difference. Building on this model, which included interviews with people working as tech support employees, responsible for the troubleshooting and fixing of mobiles, laptops and any other tech gear, we can follow the leakage of women's personal images, and videos, to at least one of the channels of distribution: the technical support labs.

Literature Review

The cyberspace materiality

In her essay 'The Cyborg Manifesto', Donna Haraway argues that technology is not a neutral construction. She explains that we are as much inside of what we create, as our creations are inside us (2014). Cyberspace and its underlying infrastructure are not some vague immaterial space, a nebulous virtuality that hosts our activities in a vacuum, rather, it is a complicated material construction, directly influenced by male-oriented designs and policies imposed by the major players in the tech industry. The existing gender hierarchy and sexist stereotypes crystallize in IBSA, as these practices reproduce the heteronormative norms online. As 'the online and offline become increasingly enmeshed' (Jeong and Lee, 2018, p. 2) digital landscapes materialize, into all the electronic parts and the programming code that constitute the baseline infrastructure of 'the physical space made of brick, mortar, metal trailers, electronics containing magnetic and optical media' (Noble, 2018, p. 61), as those components that ultimately enable the online world to come into existence. Altogether, considering the well-documented gender gap in the tech industry an important question arises: Who invents technology and for whom? By exploring questions like the above, we remember the concerns of the cyberfeminist Faith Wilding, who argued about the impact of new technologies on women's lives. 'Cyberspace,' she suggests, 'does not exist in a vacuum; it is intimately connected to numerous real-world institutions and systems that thrive on gender segregation and gender hierarchy' (Wilding and Ensemble, 1998, p. 50).

The role of the hegemonic technology companies in this matter is undeniable. The digitization of sexuality, like any form of communication and social interaction, mediated by social media apps, is a direct set of products of the hegemonic technology companies. NCII abuse remains unregulated, both at an institutional level and as a corporate responsibility issue, concerning the policies against non-consensual circulation of personal material. The outdated legislations designed to regulate companies that are active online, as well as the failure to recognize NCII abuse as a form of gender-based violence in local criminal codes, highlight the priorities of a heteropatriarchal social structure, as we once again question which bodies ultimately matter in the emerging digital landscapes. Consequently, we need to carefully examine how the assumption that technology is a neutral artifact in reality obscures the underlying complicated infrastructure that enables the cyberspace to exit. It obscures also, the role of the particular politics and legislative policies that regulate - or fail to regulate - the digital landscapes and our interactions within them and the role of the internet service providers (ISP) and search engines that stand as entrance points to the

cyberspace mediating between users and data (Noble, 2018, p. 61). Such an obfuscation can be seen as one of the many sides of the IBSA phenomenon.

A cyberfeminist approach to resistance

Cyberfeminists of the 1990s made a clear point concerning feminine participation in the design of technology making. Judy Wajcman (2004), attempting a subversive reading of the relationship between gender and technology, points out that empirical studies are more concerned with how technology shapes gender relations than with how the existing gender hierarchy shapes modern technology. That is, how difference affects the evolution and design of technology. Cyberfeminists like Faith Wilding and Judy Wajcman proposed the 'decolonization of the web' (Wilding, 1998, p.58) with the 'renegotiation of gender power relations' as a result of the engagement with the technical and computational processes (Wajcman, 2004 p.8). From Wajcman's approach towards the abolition of technological patriarchy, by means of forming a liberating technological framework with the essential female participation in the process of design and shaping the technologies around us (Wajcman, in Salleh, 2004), to Julianne Pierce's notion of a 'hands-on skilling up in the data terrain' cyberfeminist resistance - that will create new tools and new virtual worlds that women will inhabit corrupting patriarchy (Fernandez and Wilding, 2003, pp.22–23), today's feminist cyber(h)activist resistance is formed at the other end of the legislative gap. While cyberspace of the 1990s seemed to be forming a hope of an emancipatory landscape for women and femininities, through a cyberfeminist lens 2023's idea of the cyberworld has shifted to a more dystopian version of that early web. Hence, this brings up the question: Are we able to locate, in the several, major and minor, acts of resistance against NCII abuse and IBSA, a cyberfeminist agenda?

The multidisciplinary cyberfeminist Faith Wilding emphasizes in her article 'Notes on the Political Condition of Cyberfeminism' (1998) that 'Cyberfeminists need to make their voices heard much more strongly in the discussion of Net development' (p. 58). Wajcman agrees that participation and design have been a primary goal of the cyberfeminist agenda because technological change 'is a key aspect of gender power relations' (2006, p. 8). Wilding continues by explaining that a strategic plan of feminist action to occupy cyberspace would include 'feminist theory discussion groups, electronic publishing and exhibition venues, zines, addresses, bibliographies, mediagraphies, how-to sites, and general information exchange' (1998, p. 58).

The early feminist critique of technology expressed a rather optimistic perspective on the role of technology in gender issues. The authors Puente and Jiménez in their article '*inhabiting or occupying the web? virtual communities and feminist cyberactivism in online*

Spanish feminist theory and praxis' (2011) explain that, in the early 1970s, Valerie Solanas and Shulamith Firestone supported that technology would eventually liberate women from the tyranny of biology and gender division. A decade later, the critique had shifted, as Puente and Jiménez (2011) point out, towards a view of technology as a patriarchal tool that needs to be turned against its master to become liberating, either by forming autonomous women's groups with the aim to transform technology or by increasing participation in the normalized design process in order to dismantle the patriarchal nature of technology or, lastly, as an ultimate solution by the extremity of rejecting technology altogether.

Since then, cyberfeminist critique has accepted technology as an essential part of society and has theorized the feminine participation in the digital landscapes moving between utopian perceptions to the emancipatory, but in a grounded and political way, role of the transformative power of technology. Judy Wajcman in her book *Technofeminism* (2004), argues that the cyberspace 'is the ideal feminine medium where women should feel at home [...] because women excel within fluid systems and processes' (p. 64). Our theoretical perceptions of the digital landscapes have been strongly affected by Donna Haraway's vision of the hybrid techno-human cybernetic organism that challenges the power dynamics embedded in patriarchal technology (Puente and Jiménez, 2011). The theorist Rosi Braidotti (1996), on the other hand, emphasizes the need for new utopian digital spaces where the nomadic cyber posthuman subjects will embrace their fluidity and escape the symbolic burden of difference by affirming it. Braidotti points out the 'dangers of contemporary forms of disembodiment' (p. 10) online. To address these dangers women and femininities must reclaim difference and aim to occupy cyberspace in a way that challenges the established ways of technology and, thus, design new modes of expression. In Braidotti's words: 'The most effective strategy remains for women to use technology in order to disengage our collective imagination from the phallus and its accessory values: money, exclusion and domination, nationalism, iconic femininity and systematic violence' (1996, p. 11).

While cyberfeminist discourse, and even the use of the term cyberfeminism, has windled since the late 2000s, we can trace fragments of that discourse in today's cyber–(h)activist acts against NCII abuse. As cyberfeminists of the 1990's envisaged, drawing upon Haraway's cyborg and Sadie Plant's utopian appropriation of the cybersphere, a cyber world liberated from gender division could be conceived using irony, humor, aggression, rupture, and disorder (Wilding, 1998). Today's digital landscapes form the arena in which the claims of the feminist movement meet, and clash with tech-normative androcentrism. The feminine subjects of today form alliances online, are in motion, resist, fight, and intercept the technology-facilitated continuum of gender-based violence across all layers of the tech industry. Women programmers and allies,

women in the tech support, victims and survivors of IBSA, meet online and offline, support each other, and use their knowledge and their positionality within the industry to promote the use of technology as a means to disrupt male homosocial privilege and the distribution of pornified material. And as Paniagua demonstrates, cyberfeminism is equally fluid in its plurality of resistant acts:

> Some cyberfeminist theorize, others create art and literature, others are Internet activists, others are hacktivists –they enter into public website as hackers to dismantle media lies– and others organize workshops and activities that improve women's participation in cyberspace, which has become one of the public spaces more visited in the 21st century (2012, p. 258).

In a nutshell, resistance will arise from each subject's positionality, embracing change, whether on a major or minor scale, while putting into action the unique skill set that each and every resistant actor has.

Methodology

My basic working hypothesis is that the existing hierarchies in the tech industry[1] provide the foundation that enables the phenomenon of IBSA. In addition, my working hypothesis explores how activists organize their actions and whether there can be a cyberfeminist approach against IBSA. My research is based on qualitative methods, consisting of in-depth interviewing with intensive individual interviews, in order to explore how the subjects find meaning through their acts of resistance and how they position themselves against the extremity of violence in the digital landscape. Finally, my research focuses on the resistances that have built up against the infringing aspects of technological spaces, spaces that are privileged male spheres of interaction, and, thus, how resistant actions can disrupt the male unity of those spheres.

Examining the phenomenon from this perspective, I argue that non-consensual pornography is actually one of the many homosocial tools used to maintain gendered privileges that derive from male relationality. Firstly, I situate non-consensual sharing as part of a broader culture of technologically assisted gendered violations. At the same time, through my discussions with interviewees, I explore the resistances that have been

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[1] With the term 'tech industry', or elsewhere in the paper 'tech field', I aim to include all the technological layers that precede, formulate, design and materialize what we understand as 'the Internet', a term that also includes the specific policies and politics that substantiate the virtual experience in the digital landscapes and form the future of cyberspace, layers which largely remain white and male.

constituted, as acts of a modern resistant cyberfeminist polyphony. As part of my research, six semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted, followed by a purposive sampling of people aged 26 to 38 with specialized technical knowledge, developers and mobile device technicians, and women whose personal material has been used without consent. Specifically, I interviewed two independent programmers who attacked Chatpic.org, a mobile support technician with access to intimate personal data, and three victims of IBSA. All the participants were encouraged to share their narratives focusing on how their personal experiences relate to the phenomenon. In addition, I examine relevant articles in online news media, through which the public discourse around the phenomenon is explored, mainly in terms of legislative and activist responses to it.

The limitations in the conduct of my research and the challenges that arose are mainly related to difficulties in locating interviewees who were willing to participate. In several cases, I had to send repeated reminders to the prospective interviewees in order for the meeting to proceed. Another axis that affected the way in which meetings and interviews were held were the physical limitations due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. An additional limitation was that the interviewees were not part of a larger resistance group. Subjects who use their technological skills as tools of resistance, but also subjects/women who have experienced image-based sexual violence, do not necessarily constitute a coherent group of individuals with a clear goal; they mostly appear in the online space in an unorganized manner and often without their possible connections becoming apparent. Thus, locating them has been a time-consuming and challenging process. In the same way, the accessibility and approachability of hacktivist individuals and collectives, who organize electronic attacks and have specialized knowledge that allows them to break into computer systems and networks, is very limited. Such actors usually tread the limits of legitimacy, and constitute closed social groups, which makes it extremely difficult and time-consuming to locate organized collectives or actors who are open to being interviewed.

An equally time-consuming and demanding process was the approach of women and femininities whose personal material has been used abusively, using third-party mediators from my personal friendship circle and professional environment. Many of these women have given up on the hopeless legal proceedings and did not wish to stir up the painful memories, avoiding any mention of the events that had taken place, in order to protect their personal lives from further exposure. To those who eventually participated, the academic status of the researcher seems to have played a decisive role in their decision.

Approximately 70 personal and professional contacts from my wider friendship circle and professional environment were approached either by personal message using

instant messaging or by one-on-one meetings. At the same time, I made a call for participation on a well-known Greek feminist page on Facebook. To ensure confidentiality and privacy in the context of cultivating a climate of trust, I chose the autonomous activist e-mail platform riseup.net to mediate communication. In the same context, I emphasized to the interviewees that the audio material of our interviews would be destroyed upon completion of the research, using an open-source secure deletion tool that ensures the files become unrecoverable. Given this option and taking into account the geographical and pandemic-related limitations, the interviews were conducted in three formats: in person, by video call, and by audio call. Taking into account the privacy of our digital meetings, I gave the interviewees the option to choose their communication platform of preference. The range of choice included both mainstream and commercial, social networking and instant messaging software such as Messenger, WhatsApp and Viber, as well as lesser-known ones such as Signal and Element. These latter applications offer secure connections through encrypted conversations and do not store the users' personal information, while messages are stored exclusively on the device used and not on an intermediate server.

Findings

How what happens online affects what happens offline

Victims of IBSA and non-consensual pornographication suffer from many damaging consequences (McGlynn and Rackley, 2017). Anything that goes online, not only remains in the digital landscapes infinitely but also expands to the materiality of the offline. Online abuse and harassment have serious consequences for the lives of the targeted women, can be extended to offline abuse, and can result in lifelong mental health issues. A brief account of some cases that became known to the public, reveals the continuum of violence that extends off-the-grid and reflects the severity of NCII sharing for the lives of the targeted women, follows. In 2016, a 22-year-old student, Lina Koemtzi jumped from the ninth floor of the students' dorms following the leakage of intimate sexual pictures of her online and the shaming following the word-of-mouth image sharing (Σιδηροπούλου, 2021). In 2017, a woman from Patras was forced to relocate to the USA following the distribution, by her partner, of a personal sexual video of her online that reached 1,000,000 views (Σιδηροπούλου, 2021). In 2019, after a 14-year-old girl from Athens, Moschato, committed suicide it was found that a sexual video of her was in the possession of a 43-year-old man (Σιδηροπούλου, 2021).

To understand this phenomenon, it is essential to situate NCII abuse within the broader spectrum of gendered violence and within the scope of a male bonding homosociality, by means of othering women. One of the most widely discussed cases of IBSA, which brought online abuse into the public spotlight, was the 'Gamergate' harassment campaign in 2014–2015. Gamergate brought a whole new perspective to online violence and, in some respects, resulted in templating malicious actions online (NPR, 2019). The Gamergate harassment campaign targeted female gamers with non-consensual image sharing that resulted in doxing followed by rape threats, death threats, and calls for physical violence, both online and offline. Some women who were targeted went completely offline, canceled public appearances and hired private security (Jane, 2017˙ Hathaway, 2014). This misogynistic campaign, orchestrated by anonymous male gamers, reflects Kosofsky Sedgwick's (1985) theoretical approach to male homosociality, a term she uses to describe the establishment of male social bonds, and solidarity among men while 'women serve as the conduits through which these bonds are expressed' (Hammarén and Johansson, 2014). And what is more, the spectrum of digital violence extends far beyond "revenge" or "pornography".

Male homosocial dynamics are so strong and central to maintaining hegemonic masculinity (Hammarén and Johansson, 2014) that IBSA is a normalized and expected activity between men. Equally, in professional tech labs with legal, but oblique, terms of service in place, harassment thrives behind closed lab doors. One of my informants worked as a mobile phone technician for a leading Greek smartphone and computer repair company, with a high revenue. She was part of the otherwise all-male repair team responsible for the maintenance and repair of mobile devices. Chrysa revealed that violation of privacy was a common everyday activity in the lab. Under the pretense of providing faster customer services, her (male) colleagues demanded personal passcodes from the female customers, granting them full access to personal images and videos, material that they subsequently copied and kept archived for their personal use, without the knowledge of the women that appeared in the material. Resembling a challenge trophy, the volume of such archives sometimes reached terabytes, while it was common to circulate women's private images around the company using the corporate email accompanied by objectifying sexist commentary.

Another informant, Liana, a 26-year-old woman, was manipulated and kept in an abusive relationship by her 'boyfriend', under the threat of uploading her rape video online. Similarly, another informant, Sophia, born and raised in a Greek village, started receiving anonymous calls, suffered the loss of her social status, and internalized a huge burden of shame, following the online leakage of intimate pictures of her. These were images that she had shared with her boyfriend within the context of their personal intimate relationship which he had then posted online, an act of violation of trust and

invasion of privacy. So, how can tech-displaced women and non-normative subjects draw on cyberspace hacking as a way of confronting the othering regulatory mechanisms of violence?

Technology as an othering tool

The theoretical concept of the 'Other' as an analytical tool has been established by various theorists, including de Beauvoir, Lacan, Said, and Spivak. It suggests that subjects understand themselves in reference to the others and based upon what they are not (Harmer and Lumsden, 2019, pp. 15–17). It is particularly interesting to examine how women are constructed as the 'other' in the tech industry in order to understand the links between technology, non-consensual pornography, and IBSA in general. Harmer and Lumsden (2019) explain that 'dominant or hegemonic groups can exert control over processes of representation of otherness' thus constructing the 'other' as the inferior, the subordinate, an otherness which at the same time maintains the hegemonic order and men's dominant position in society by using the female sexualized body as 'the focal point for othering', 'depriving women of power, privilege and independence' (2019, p.16).

According to Bird, hegemonic masculinity is maintained by employing emotional detachment, competitiveness, and the sexual objectification of women (1996, p. 121). The tech-normative androcentric white male-dominated tech industry preserves the structural order of gender and defends the privilege of remaining male, through homosocial interactions, male bonding, and, finally, by cultivating a tech bro culture mainly by focusing on the sexual objectification of women, the ultimate 'other'. My informant Chrysa, a 30-year-old mobile support technician describes her first encounter with her male colleagues at the new job she had just landed:

> Ch: So [...] at first they were surprised that a woman was going to work with them, this was rather new to them, they weren't expecting it. The first thing they told me when we first met was: '*Well Chrysa, I don't know what they told you, but it's a guys' place here*'. So, I'm like OK, I don't know what that means, but OK. I mean, I asked them, So, what do you do? You swear? What makes this lab a guys' place? You fart? '*No, he went on, it's just guys.*' And after that, '*You'll get it.*' Sure OK. I figured it out after a while. They meant this thing. That they did what they called '*wanking around*'. They blurted out another word. '*Hornying around*'.

> Ei: What did they mean by '*wanking around*'?

> Ch: That they were talking about women, they were watching porn, not just the customers' videos, I mean porn videos of female customers, they were also watching

[intentional] porn on their phones. They went, like, I just saw some porn video I liked, and they all sat together to watch it.

Ei: Is this the 'guys place' they meant?

Ch: Well, that and that they were picking on each other, teasing each other, '*a pussy came in, ooooh, go get her*' or they were sending pictures of this female customer around the company, using the [business] email or through messenger.'

Watching porn with colleagues at work or playing war games like Nerf guns around the office masquerading as a team–building activity establishes seclusion, aggression, sexism, competitiveness, and a bro culture that cultivates male bonding using misogyny and segregation to achieve a connection between men. Othered women are routinely objectified, dehumanized, and violated, whether it is in a formal corporate IT environment or the dim repair lab of a successful business with branches all around Greece. Chrysa continued by describing the gamified routine of gaining access to the personal images and videos of female customers:

It was like a game, to get their password, certainly from a woman they wanted to violate, and they had a method. [...] They did that methodically. They had a method both in what they would say to women [to persuade them to give the guys their personal passcode] and to how they would do it [...] we misled them into handing over their passcodes. To get the job done faster and for the 'vulgars' to view the personal photos of the women who came to have their smartphones fixed.

As Jane (2016) points out, digital worlds are the terrain within which new forms of abuse are registered, but which also reflect traditional perspectives on gender. Such perspectives insist on considering women and femininities as monolithic subjects whose primary value is merely a sexual one and who must always be reminded of their gendered position. If women cross the line, Jane explains, they are punished and must be reminded of their stereotypical gender and traditional role (2016). For Chryssa's colleagues women are sexual devices, their purpose being to satisfy their voyeuristic pleasures while they perceive their own actions as a natural consequence of/response to the private sexual material simply existing.

The above is consistent with the evidence cited by another informant, Thodoris. He is a programmer and activist, who managed to temporarily block the distribution of non-consensual material distributed on Chatpic.org. Several of the non-consensual images that he took down to submit to the legal authorities were taken secretly from daily activities, such as the women's workplaces (coffee houses, bars, offices), or even public places, such as the beach, buses or women ordering coffee. Replicating the hierarchical

social stratification, the digital landscapes and spaces of technology are constructed as unequal and privileged spaces and use specialized technical knowledge as the gatekeeping of racial, gendered, and class privilege (Kolakowski, 2021).

The technicians at Chrysa's work not only viewed their customers' pictures but also copied them and kept an archive of them, without any feeling of wrongdoing whatsoever, archiving literally terabytes of personal images. This homosocial ritual was undertaken with the tacit approval of their employer, and perhaps the only thing connecting those working-class technicians with their superiors was the violation of women. 'Our bosses knew what was going on, they were very OK with it', Chrysa said, 'and they didn't care'. The employers also participated and enjoyed the homosocial ritual of violating women's privacy and did not see any wrongdoing in it. The employers would say to justify their actions: 'Well, if that slut doesn't care about her smartphone, why should we?' Chrysa explained. Technicians acted with absolute freedom to copy women's private images and distribute them around.

Once again, we can see how the gender division is sustained. Within these standards, which are impossible to maintain, women are punished for being sexual and for not protecting themselves from the abuse of their personal data. Through these practices, gender exclusions emphatically thicken and sediment, while the category 'woman' seems to be digitally re-inscribed into the technological system of representations as a natural category. It is as though women in technology are the programming 'errors' (bugs) that need to be corrected (debugged) from the elite male code that must remain pure from femininity.

'Power' suggests Michel Foucault 'produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth' (2011, p. 221). The male-oriented design, along with the homosocial framework, within which the digital landscapes exist, are the materials that constitute the contemporary, dystopian, and gendered cyber landscape, a space that is unsafe for femininities. And while we can trace acts of resistance on a larger or smaller scale, IBSA is often considered a 'harmless prank' undertaken by 'misunderstood tricksters' in the context of male homosociality (Jane, as cited in McGlynn and Rackley, 2017). However, it is neither an isolated incident nor a harmless joke. This is evident in the personal narrative of Sophia, a victim of non-consensual image sharing. Sophia was informed through her acquaintances that intimate semi-nude photos, which she had privately sent to her partner, had been circulating around in her wider social circle months before she finally found out. Men who circulated her private images used Facebook, Messenger, and Instagram, or showed them to each other as part of a game that Sophia interprets as an 'entertaining activity between men'. Sophia lives in constant fear that she will have to deal with the leaked material again in the future. At the time, she was working at an internet cafe serving mostly underaged

boys. Her concerns regarding gendered violence is apparent in the following passage. It is evident that women and femininities of all ages can be vulnerable to IBSA, no matter the age difference between them, young boys can be just as aggressive and abusive as grown men:

> The majority of these young boys make you feel despair [sigh] [...] they're always talking about things like that... never saying a name, maybe because I was there, things like I have the pictures of Joa... [...] To tell you the truth I was scared, you know, that it could have backfired, they could have told me why are YOU reacting... uh, because I'm sure that they knew [about her images], it occurred to me that they might be talking about me, to tell you the truth.

Thus, the question that arises is: what form of resistance emerge from the hostile areas of cyberspace and what actions can the subjects take against IBSA?

Discussion

Cyber-(h)activism and types of resistance

> 'Zeros now have a place, and they displace the phallic order of ones' (Wajcman, 2004).

The cyberfeminist movement emerged through a multiplicity of socio-political transformations and theoretical shifts. Within the cyberfeminist discourse, women should aim for the appropriation of technology to subvert gendered power relations. In the same way that Paniagua (2012) suggests a multiplicity of action, the diversity of resistant acts is prominent in the narratives of my informants. Each subject would contribute resistantly in many different ways, drawing from their positionality and experience in and within the tech field. I argue that these actions are part of a broader cyber-activist framework of action. My attempt to roughly divide cyber-activism into two forms of action, brings forth, on the one hand, hacking/cracking practices and, on the other, call-to-action tools through the use of social media platforms. To conjoin these types of resistance into one, I refer to them as cyber-(h)activism.

My research confirms a lack of bibliographical references to purely feminist hacktivist collectives. These collectives are rare and uncommon and although we do occasionally encounter female hackers, they are a tiny minority, usually absorbed by pre-existing male hacker communities (Segan, 2000) and do not form communities of their own. This is also the case also for my two activist informants, (h)activist actors who fought

against the outbreak of non-consensual image distribution on Chatpic.org in Greece. Thodoris and Thalia are both programmers and they do not know each other. It was during the late 2020 COVID-19 lockdowns that they both first heard about Chatpic.org. The massive circulation of non-consensual images was being made public for the first time in Greece and attracted their attention.

Thodoris, while doom scrolling, read a tweet from a woman calling for a petition to close down Chatpic.org. He immediately began to investigate the website's vulnerabilities and launched a brute force attack against it, using distributed denial-of-service (DDOS) attacks to stop the distribution of these images, attempting to bring down the website. Since the website is behind Cloudflare, this was impossible. Even so, a DDOS attack can bring down a service, but this would only be momentarily until the admins realize that they are under a DDOS attack and block the malicious traffic. One of the features of such platforms that Thodoris took advantage of – with the mindset of a, closer to the initial definition, hacker – is that when new images are uploaded the old ones are pushed behind them. Since he could not bypass Cloudflare, he created a bot in about 30 minutes that uploaded huge numbers of images of kittens, one after the other, spamming the abusive channels with cute images of baby cats. This was infuriating for the anonymous users of the platforms and soon enough the admins blocked the attack.

Thodoris continued working to find a new way to bring down Chatpic.org. Before upgrading his bot with new features, he turned to his friends and started a mass round-robin attack against the website, by uploading harmless images and voting down the existing non-consensual ones for them to be taken down. He then enhanced the bot with text analysis using the TensorFlow library to identify nude images. The bot uses text analysis to identify NCII sharing portals and then report them. Thodoris consequently open-sourced the bot and used social media to spread it around resulting in massive participation and downloads. We can thus see how the two forms of cyber-activism, hacking and social media advocating, are interwoven in the case of Thodoris. Mainstream social media platforms were used to organize the attacks, while the actors simply downloaded the code and ran it, in many cases having never met each other, thus opening cracks in the digital landscape of abuse. Thodori's bot has now evolved into a NCII abuse search engine. An interested party can upload their personal image for the search engine to codify it with a unique hash. In this way, the victim's privacy is maintained, and images are not recirculated. Finally, the engine returns the websites, portals, and locations where the image or video was found, tracing the online distribution and enabling victims to take legal actions against the hosting entities.

About the same time, Thalia, my other programmer informant, read an article covering Thodoris's attacks. She got immediately became involved and wrote another type of

bot, a chatbot using Python with just ten lines of code. As Thalia read that Thodoris was attacking Chatpic.org with images of cats, she acted in parallel aiming to block their chat, an instant messaging feature that abusers use to expose personal information about women, such as name, social media accounts, or home/work address. Her primary work as a programmer writing code for commercial chatbots was instrumental in her immediate response. Her chatbot managed to keep the chat clean for some time by uploading subtitles from a series called 'Gossip Girl' every five seconds. Thalia even went as far as to use the large IP range of her work to launch the attacks, because IP's were banned shortly after the attack was recognized as such. Later on, she opened up her actions and discussed with trusted coworkers how to further the attacks.

Thodoris took it a step further in the legal direction. Along with Disinfaux Collective, an investigative team of journalists, he testified giving evidence of 2,500 individual perpetrators and at least 30GB of non-consensual material, a conservative, in his words, account of the period of intense activity against Chatpic.org. At that time, programmers, journalists, lawyers, and readers of the articles who contributed to tracing the channels of the leak (Νίνη, Ρηγόπουλος and Σπυράκης, 2021), were working in parallel to bring down the portal.

Given the androcentric design, the male dominated character of the tech industry and the lack of hard laws that regulate sufficiently IBSA, the question that arises, taking a similar critical stand to Audre Lorde's (1984) admonishment, is whether the master's digital tools can dismantle the master's cyberspace and its online rooms. As Wajcman (2004) demonstrated, the relationship between gender and technology is neither fixed nor immutable. The cyber-(h)acktivist actions directed against Chatpic.org confirm this view. Apart from Thalia, numerous tech experts responded to Thodoris's Twitter call and a semi-coordinated attack went through, resulting finally in the geographical ban accessing Chatpic.org in Greece, which continues up to this day. While this might be a drop in the ocean, given that there are 10,000 similar websites, the decentralized grassroots coordinated actions of a number of actors resulted in political and legal pressure, both on Chatpic.org and on the legal authorities in Greece to take immediate action.

For Jane (2016), this dynamic use of social media networks is the springboard for a fourth wave of feminism. In these (h)activist actions taken by Thodoris and Thalia, we can detect the formation of the new landscapes for which Rosi Braidotti argued. These new landscapes of resistance against patriarchal norms can be seen as aspects of contemporary feminist cyberactivism, with striking results. Nevertheless, questioning power relations and the empirical hierarchy is at the basis of a global feminist claim agenda. Thus, these new forms of gender violence are merely the digital successor to the 'traditional' expressions of violence and are undermined by the forms of resistance

pulling in the opposite direction, both by new feminist tools and by historical feminist practices.

So, how do we inhabit the inhospitable, saturated, and hierarchical internet and what strategies of resistance emerge to reimagine cyberspace as a site of militancy? In an open dialogue with feminisms of the past, personal narratives are intertwined with contemporary online relationalities to articulate alternative discourses. With their flexible shiftings towards the use of technology and re-appropriation of social media, my interviewees reclaim visibility within the digital landscapes, reimagining virtual materiality.

The new feminist formulations are counterpoint to the male homosocial relativities that shape techno-culture, and are folded into an informal supportive grid, where women and femininities subversively use the same digital platforms that facilitate sexual abuse through images. They share their stories, publicly supporting each other, destabilizing dominant narratives of the rape culture, and the devaluation of IBSA into isolated incidents or natural aspects of a 'scandalous' male nature.

These informal networks seem to have an empowering effect. Another informant, Liana, after years of dealing with IBSA alone, eventually felt empowered as she gradually began to open up and build relationships of emotional closeness with other subjects displaced by dominant gender norms and began to experience a revolutionary solidarity. 'I have to talk about it', she declares emphatically, 'I have to talk about it because it's only by pure luck that I' m not dead'. For Liana, conversations with women who have suffered similar violent attacks, are meaningful and emancipatory: 'This has helped me a lot to understand that it wasn't my fault!'

Shifting to become an active agent of resistance, when she felt strong enough, Liana aimed to protect other women from finding themselves in the same position as her. Thus, by appropriating the medium, she used the same technological means that her perpetrator had used to threaten and abuse her, this time against him: 'I called all his friends on Instagram, every woman I found I texted [pause] most of them replied: 'You're full of shit!' The others who took me seriously deleted him.' Employing the same line of action, Constantina while dealing with her abusive ex-partner doxing her and trying to manage the social anxiety caused by the public exposure of her personal information online, refers to the necessity of having a supportive network that does not re-traumatize women and provides a safe space to speak up. Having someone to listen to your story is, in itself, emancipatory.

Chrysa, said that, as time passed and she could feel that her productivity made her an essential part of the team, she began to feel empowered and could manage to resist the misogynistic violations of female customers. She launched a new working style aiming

to protect the personal material of women passing through the lab, as much as possible. Small-scale actions, such as informing clients of their rights, presenting alternative ways of repairing the appliances without handing over personal passwords, and setting obstacles to her male colleagues, undermined the well-orchestrated and invisible violation by men: 'When female customers entered I deliberately didn't ask for their passcode, or, if I did, I wrote it down on a piece of paper, so they [male colleagues] couldn't find it, I'd hide it somewhere.'

Such micro-resistances are a different type of hacking that remind us once again of Paniagua's (2012, p. 258) view on the polymorphism and multiplicity of cyberfeminists. It is a (h)acktivism that emerges from feminist theory, closer to the historical meaning of the term hacking, as the confrontation and processing of a technological problem through more creative ways that disrupt the sequence of violation practices. Chrysa, the inside-the-lab actor, identified the vulnerabilities and ultimately 'hacked' the lab's misogynistic fraternal homosociality, while at the same time her actions highlighted the fragile nature of their male identity and the homosocial 'games'. Behind the technician's door, Chrysa uses her specialized technical knowledge to protect women's privacy. She ensured the safe destruction of the copies that had been retained as part of the backup and restore procedure, using software that renders their data unrecoverable. Thus, the few women who enter male-dominated technical environments can actively become physical barriers to IBSA practices.

What control do average users have over their digital image, without specialized technological knowledge? And what kind of coping strategies can be put together against IBSA? My informants Konstantina, Liana, and Sofia who are independent autonomous actors, all victims and survivors of IBSA, follow, without consciously acknowledging, an exact cyberfeminist agenda. They use social media to connect with other women and empower each other, follow how-to sites to learn about ways to better protect themselves, and discuss their experiences to help other women and femininities. All of them, as our interview came to a close, expressed that sharing their stories with me had made them feel empowered and that they now felt part of a larger resistant wave. Thus, transforming themselves into active subjects within the inhospitable landscapes of the online world, Sophia, Constantina, and Liana, use online resources to educate themselves on the issues of online safety. For instance, they now change their passwords regularly, while all three have activated the two-factor authentication (2FA). They inhabit the web, draw information from it, and have greater control over their digital data. Sophia no longer stores personal images on her phone, in case it gets stolen. Constantina, consulting with a more tech-savvy friend, reads technical articles about protecting herself better online. Similarly, after reading other women's stories online, Liana felt empowered to start talking about what had happened to her. Digital

connectivity that links movements to people, texts to actions, and experiences to ears that are willing to listen are, thus, interspersed among asynchronous self-forming groups, groups that are ready to share knowledge and use radical means against the gendered displacement of women, cultivated by the homosocial network of technological specialization.

Conclusion

Throughout my research, I have attempted to outline the different forms of gender violence, as these emerge into the new digital landscapes extending their regulatory authority online. These ever-changing, immaterially connected worlds constitute the new fields of social interaction and subjectification. The example of Chatpic.org brought the dimensions of gender violence online into the foreground, along with the versatile mischievous (h)activist acts of resistance against it. While the debate on difference is shifting towards the online structures and new spaces of sociability that arise digitally, we need to examine how the gender hierarchy is being re-inscribed in the digital space and how it ultimately shapes the online gendered experience on the internet. A battlefield of conflicts and of ever-changing power relations, the internet has become the new frontier of humanity. Never before in human history has communication existed in such a direct and rapid manner. Equally, never before has communication been the monopoly of such a small group of companies. 'Communications technologies', writes Donna Haraway, 'are the crucial tools recrafting our bodies, highlighting the implications of the transition from the offline world to the online (2014 p. 245). 'These tools', she continues, 'embody and enforce new social relations for women worldwide' (ibid., p. 245).

Our navigation among the reefs of digital subjectification, is followed by submersion in the multilateral resistances against the phenomenon. These resistances confirm the Foucauldian observation: 'Where there is power, there is resistance' (2001, p. 119). The polyphony of resistances intercepting the digital forms of violence, with activistic solo-acts, acts which can potentially transfigure to larger collective claims, are in accordance with Foucault's view on power relations and are the hopeful ramparts of a multifaceted cyberfeminism. In the healing properties of sharing, we can detect the metamorphosis of the digital traumas to the new digital claims of feminist proximity.

The voices of women, resisting and attacking misogynistic behaviours in online communities, resonate on social media, claiming visibility. Women who apply their expertise against practices of IBSA are opening up cracks in the normalized gamified violation, whereas the practical resistant actions, undertaken by male allies, are

important tools for invading the established male technocratic sovereignty, from within. The internet is predominantly white and male. These digital landscapes are in need of more subaltern subjectivities to inhabit cyberspace, to give voice to hitherto unspoken experiences, to claim more space and eventually redefine it. While everything, material and immaterial, corporeal and incorporeal, is now connected online, the percentage of female participation in the design, production, and programming of technology, however, is still extremely low (Braidotti, 1996, p.16). What does this mean for the lives that women lead and, from a wider perspective, what does that also mean for the world we live in? As Wilding says, in what world do we want to live in, who designs this world and for whom (1998).

Finally, daring to make an analytical leap with reflective alertness, I claim that we should not focus on technology as the problem, but rather on how to break up the unity of the cis, white, male homosociality. Maybe, within this privileged, white, and male-dominated tech landscape, the internet is indeed the new terrain in which feminist claims will rise. The role of women, femininities, and subaltern subjects in these digital landscapes is, thus, crucial. As the French philosopher Hélène Cixous urges, 'Woman must write her self [...] Woman must put herself into the text – as into the world and into history – by her own movement' (Cixous, Cohen and Cohen, 1976, p. 875). In other words, in order to inhabit cyberspace, 'grab cyber-space so as to exit the old, decayed, seduced, abducted and abandoned corpse of phallo-logocentric patriarchy' (Braidotti, 1996, p. 13).

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Skyltar (by Nina Ranemyr)

'Sweden is Clearly Wearing the Yellow Jersey': A Critical Discourse Analytical Approach to Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy and the Export of Arms

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Abstract

Informed by the normative commitments of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, Sweden's feminist foreign policy (FFP) and the export of arms have demonstrated inconsistencies in Swedish foreign policy. The images that Sweden has through these practices are contradictory. By combining Fan's conceptual framework and the concept of recognition, this paper examines Sweden's image in terms of FFP and the export of arms, provides a critical perspective and argues for Sweden's sense of security. For this purpose, Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA) and the three-dimensional model are employed. This paper argues that FFP strengthens Sweden's sense of security by creating distinctiveness and relevance for the country in the presence of like-minded nations. However, Sweden's export of arms, especially outside the European Union (EU), reproduces gender binaries because Sweden's defence and security interests may outweigh its ideals.

Keywords: Nation Branding; Recognition; Feminist Foreign Policy; Sweden; Critical Discourse Analysis

Introduction

In 2014, Sweden was the first country to explicitly launch a feminist foreign policy (FFP). This FFP was strongly informed by the United Nations Security Council

(UNSC) Resolution 1325 agenda on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) as a normative framework for foreign and security policies (Aggestam and Bergman Rosamond, 2016, p. 324). However, Sweden's record as the world's leading arms exporter is often highlighted in order to demonstrate the inconsistencies embedded in its FFP (Aggestam, et al., 2019, p. 28) due to the potential use of arms to perpetuate gender-based violence (Robinson, 2021, p. 28).

Sweden's exports and weapons manufacturing presents a close interaction between ideals and interests (Coetzee, 2017, p. 45). The impressions the country gained, such as a 'state to be feared', and a 'state that is respected by others because it has the capacity to manufacture fighter jets', through its accomplishments in, among others, the aircraft sector and Gripen sales to South Africa, starkly contrast with its more common national identity labels, such as moral hegemon or moral superpower (ibid., p. 58).

Deriving from this reasoning, this paper explores the relationship between Sweden's sense of security and its nation branding in foreign policy discourses. The arguments are based on a master's thesis study completed in 2021. The research question asked: '*How does Sweden's sense of security relate to its nation branding in foreign policy discourses; especially in terms of its feminist foreign policy and the export of arms?*' The study focused on two contradictory practices: FFP and the export of arms, with the aims of: 1) investigating Sweden's image and sense of security in terms of both practices and 2) examining and critiquing the unequal power relations. The study also addressed the diplomatic crisis in 2015 between Sweden and Saudi Arabia to support the research question and aims. In this paper, valuable literature published since 2021 has been included to strengthen the arguments.

Notably, the recent government of Sweden, which took power in 2022, has abandoned FFP. Sweden's new Minister for Foreign Affairs, Billström, said that, while gender equality is a fundamental value, 'the label obscures the fact that Swedish foreign policy must be based on Swedish values and Swedish interests' (Walfridsson, 2022). Furthermore, Sweden's concerns in the Baltic Region have led to a search for new security pathways. Russia's attempts to build up its forces in the Baltic Region over the years and, most recently, its war against Ukraine, have increased momentum for Sweden to secure its NATO membership (Alberque and Schreer, 2022, p. 67). With these changes in its security policy, Sweden's branding as 'the country of gender equality' (The Handbook, 2018, p. 51) is now in question.

Feminist Foreign Policy

FFP provided a broad cosmopolitan framework for women and girls (Bergman Rosamond, 2020, p. 227), arguing that states 'ought not to make a difference between the inside and outside' (Bergman Rosamond, 2012, p. 57). It reflected gender cosmopolitanism, which refers to the 'co-constitutive relationship between Sweden's promotion of women's rights, security, bodily integrity, and justice at home and abroad' and 'a commitment to the protection of all women's entitlements to civil liberties' (Bergman Rosamond, 2020, p. 218). Robinson (2021), however, argues that the liberal cosmopolitan approach reproduces existing power relations, and instead suggests a critical feminist ethic of care that can reveal the epistemic and physical violence inflicted through constitutive gender binaries.

As pointed out above, arms sales by countries that follow a feminist-informed foreign policy, such as Sweden and Canada, lead to contradictions in relation to gender binaries and power constellations. This is because the arms might potentially be used to perpetuate gender-based violence (Robinson, 2021, p. 28). Additionally, FFP sits within the tension between gender binaries due to the discursive constructions – which are not fixed, but open to re-writing and re-enactment – of ethical or moral values as feminine and the gains of saving strangers from humanitarian crises as paternally masculine (Robinson, 2021, pp. 26-27).

An illustrative example of the tension between ideals and interests can be seen in Sweden's response to the refugee crisis in 2015, when the country decided to stop migrants at the border because it claimed it was facing 'a system collapse' (Ericson, 2018, p. 98). It was proclaimed that Sweden needed breathing space, and closing the borders was claimed to be the only way to secure the traditional Swedish model of a modern and gender-equal society (ibid., pp. 98–99). This incident demonstrated a masculinist protectionism, presenting politicians as brave defenders who had to make difficult choices that may seem or feel wrong to the 'naïve' public (ibid., p. 98). In this sense, the shift away from FFP towards a policy focusing on physical security interests is worth acknowledging and investigating in future studies, which could examine the interaction between ideals (distant others) and interests (national, security and defence interests).

Nation Branding, Nation's Image and Recognition

Nation branding suggests the engagement of governments in self-conscious activities aimed at producing a certain image of the nation (Bolin and Ståhlberg, 2009, p. 4). Different from nation-building, nation branding is about creating (intangible)

commodities rather than communities (Bolin and Miazhevich, 2018, p. 537). It targets external audiences and focuses on the future rather than the past (ibid., p. 532). Nonetheless, acknowledging and understanding core features of national identity is important for a nation's brand strategy, considering that the latter is drawn from a nation's culture in the widest sense, as well as from companies and brands (Dinnie, 2016, p. 113).

Fan's conceptual framework for a nation's image (shown in Figure 1, cited in Fan, 2008, p. 18, in Stock, 2009, p. 122) provides an explanation of image-formation and an understanding of the relationship between national identity and nation branding. Based on this framework, first of all, it is necessary to have a clear picture of who one is in order to communicate and promote self-perception to the outside world (Stock, 2009, p. 122). Secondly, a reference point is set whereby national identity becomes meaningful through comparisons and contrasts with other nations (Fan, 2008, p. 11; Stock, 2009, p. 122).

This framework distinguishes between how a nation believes itself to be perceived by others – the construed image – and how that nation is actually perceived – the actual image (Fan, 2008; Stock, 2009, p.122). Subsequently, a nation strives to form and communicate its image to the outside world through its projected image, which might or might not represent the ostensible reality (Fan, 2008, p. 13; Stock, 2009, p. 123). The desired image, lastly, refers to the visionary perception that a nation would like other nations to have about it in the future (Fan, 2008; Stock, 2009, p. 123).
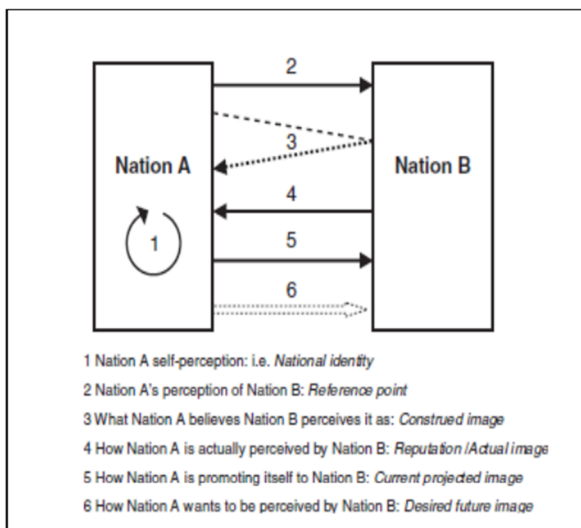

Figure 1: The six key perspectives of nation image (Fan, 2008, p. 1 in Stock, 2009, p. 122)

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To date, there are only limited studies focusing on the relationship between a state's sense of security and its nation branding. However, the literature demonstrates examples of how states have utilized public diplomacy and soft power activities to gain a sense of security. For instance, Simons (2015, pp. 217–221) details Russia's attempts to strengthen its image of being a force for good in international relations by drawing attention to the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and the Yalta Conference to argue that 'the world is not complete without Russia'. Thus, Russia aims to deliver the message that it plays a positive role in the world, and it tends to position itself as an alternative/competitor to the West (ibid., p. 220).

Browning (2015, p. 211) argues that, because they are part of a broader commonality, states are primarily concerned with having their individuality recognized, rather than seeking territorial and physical security. In a globalized world, self-esteem and recognition are claimed through one's usefulness, relevance and added value, which constitute subjectivity in an environment that emphasizes similarity (ibid., p. 204) For instance, the 2010 report by Finland's Brand Delegation emphasized the country's need to stand apart and offer something distinctive; it suggested that Finland could be the problem solver of the world (Country Brand Report, 2010, p. 3; Browning, 2015, p. 208).

Materials and methods

This paper adopts poststructuralism and feminist poststructuralism as its theoretical perspectives for examining foreign policy discourses. Poststructuralism argues that there is no fundamental or essential self, but instead 'we speak ourselves into existence within terms of available discourses' (Davies, 2000, p. 55). Feminist poststructuralism refers to 'a mode of knowledge production which uses poststructuralist theories of language, subjectivity, social processes and institutions to understand existing power relations and to identify areas and strategies for change' (Weedon, 1987, pp. 40-41).

The methodological approach employed is Fairclough's approach to critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA is interested in the relationship between language and power (Wodak, 2001, pp. 1–2), and contributes to a better understanding of relations between discourse and other elements of social life (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012, p. 78). In addition, the three-dimensional model is adopted as an analytical framework (as shown in Figure 2). This model proposes that every instance of language is a communicative event consisting of three dimensions, which respectively focus on the linguistic features of the text (text), the process relating to the production and

consumption of the text (discursive practice) and the wider social practice to which the communicative event belongs (Jørgenson and Phillips, 2002, p. 61).
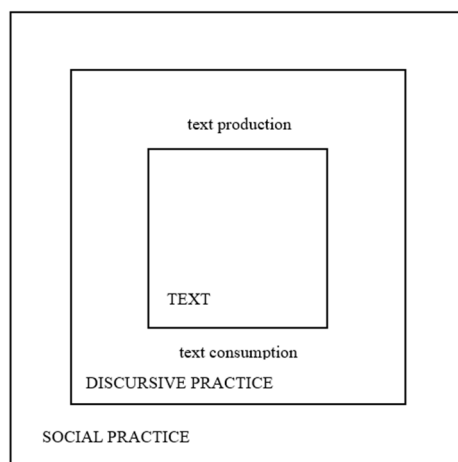

Figure 2: Fairclough's three-dimensional model for CDA
(A redrawing of the figure cited in Fairclough, 1992, p. 73; Jørgenson and Phillips, 2002, p. 61)

In analysing the linguistic features of texts, various tools can be used, such as interactional control, ethos, metaphors, wording and grammar (Jørgenson and Phillips, 2002, p. 73). For instance, transitivity focuses on how elements are connected (or not) with subjects and objects, and investigates the ideological consequences of different forms (ibid.). Modality focuses on a speaker's affinity to their statement to varying degrees, demonstrating that 'what people commit themselves to in texts is an important part of how they identify themselves, the texturing of identities' (Fairclough, 2003, p. 165).

Consequently, an analysis of texts' discursive practice mediates the relationship between texts and social practice, and through the discursive practice the texts shape and are shaped by the social practice (Jørgenson and Phillips, 2002, p. 62). Such an analysis focuses on how the authors of the text draw upon existing discourses and genres to create the text and how the receivers of the texts also apply available discourses and genres in the consumption and interpretation of texts (ibid., p. 60).

In the third dimension, the social practice of discourse is analysed by looking at the order, and the social matrix of discourse. The order of discourse refers to a 'higher semiotic order' and indicates that the discursive aspect of hegemonies is open to articulatory struggle and change (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, p. 148). It is a socially structured articulation of discursive practices that constitutes the discursive

facet of the social order of a social field (p. 114). The social matrix of discourse is the partly non-discursive analysis of texts, where social and cultural relations and structures that constitute the wider context of the discursive practice are explained (Jørgenson and Phillips, 2002, p. 75).

The data collection was applied based on the purposive sampling technique, which emphasizes an in-depth study of information-rich cases, learning a great deal about the research question and the issues the researchers considered to be of central importance (Emmel, 2013, p. 34). The sampled materials consist of both primary and secondary data (shown in Table I), originally produced in English.

Table 1: The List of Documents[1]

	Year	Title	Type of material	Speaker
Text 1	2018	The Handbook of Feminist Foreign Policy	Report	Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Text 2	2018	Government Communication 2017/18:114 Strategic Export Controls in 2017 – Military Equipment and Dual-Use Items	Legal document	Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Text 3	2017	Statement by Sweden at the UN Security Council Briefing on Small Arms	Statement	Carl Skau
Text 4	2017	Speech at the UN Security Council debate on Resolution 1325 Women, Peace and Security	Speech	Margot Wallström
Text 5	2015	Speech at the open debate on Resolution 1325 in the UNSC	Speech	Olof Skoog
Text 6	2019	Feminist Foreign Policy: A conversation with Former Foreign Minister Margot Wallström	Interview – in text format	Margot Wallström interviewed by Rachel Volgelstein
Text 7	2020	Sweden's Margot Wallström on the lessons from feminist foreign policy	Interview (transcribed)	Margot Wallström interviewed by Sara Bertillson

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[1] Table I describes the list of documents sampled. There are seven documents altogether, representing Sweden's foreign policy discourses. Text 1 is entitled: 'The Handbook of Feminist Foreign Policy', published in 2018 as a report. The speaker is Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Sweden). Text 2 is entitled: 'Government Communication 2017/18:114 Strategic Export Controls in 2017 – Military Equipment and Dual-Use Items', published in 2018 as a legal document. The speaker is Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Sweden). Text 3 is entitled: 'Statement by Sweden at the UN Security Council Briefing on Small Arms', published in 2017 as a statement. The speaker is Carl Skau. Text 4 is entitled: 'Speech at the UN Security Council debate on Resolution 1325 Women, Peace and Security', published in 2017 as a speech. The speaker is Margot Wallström. Text 5 is entitled: 'Speech at the open debate on Resolution 1325 in the UNSC', published in 2015 as a speech. The speaker is Olof Skoog. Text 6 is entitled: 'Feminist Foreign Policy: A conversation with Former Foreign Minister Margot Wallström', published in 2019 as an interview – in text. The speakers are Margot Wallström and Rachel Volgelstein. Text 7 is entitled: 'Sweden's Margot Wallström on the lessons from feminist foreign policy', published in 2020 as an interview – transcribed. The speakers are Margot Wallström and Sara Bertillson.

Analysis

The master's thesis study from which this paper benefits asked the following research question: 'How does Sweden's sense of security relate to its nation branding in foreign policy discourses, especially in terms of its feminist foreign policy and the export of arms?' Based on the three-dimensional model suggested by Fairclough, this paper presents an analysis through noted extracts.

Textual Analysis

The findings demonstrate Sweden's commitment to being a *role model* for gender equality. Using modal verbs indicates Sweden's strong affinity with becoming a *role model* for gender equality and the textured self-identity through modality.[2] Sweden's self-identification and desired image, which is the image it seeks for others to have of the country in the future, revolve around being a role model. Furthermore, transitive verbs such as '*strengthen*'[3] and '*contribute*'[4] forge a connection between FFP and Sweden's image as the champion of gender equality, a role model, and the first instance for others to look up to. Here, self-esteem arises out of the (supposed) esteem of others (Fukuyama, 2019, p. 10).

The following extract claims that: 'The country's brand has become even clearer and stronger: Sweden is *clearly* wearing the yellow jersey' (The Handbook, 2018, p. 51), demonstrating a comparison of Sweden to the overall leader of the Tour de France, thus emphasizing Sweden's leading position in gender equality. The use of '*clearly*' indicates certainty through modality. Notably, the Tour de France has been male-dominated throughout its history, until women returned to the tour after 33 years in July 2022 (Martens, 2022). In this sense, the choice of the metaphor of Sweden to indicate leadership in gender equality can also be seen as contradictory. Another extract demonstrates that FFP *marks* Sweden *out*, while the country champions gender equality

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[2] "Sweden shall be a role model for gender equality, both nationally and internationally." (The Handbook, 2018, p. 18)

[3] "Several missions abroad also note that the policy [feminist foreign policy] has strengthened Sweden's position as a champion of gender equality and women's and girls' rights. The country's brand has become even clearer and stronger: "Sweden is clearly wearing the yellow jersey". (The Handbook, 2018, p. 51)

[4] "The feminist foreign policy has also contributed to Sweden being even more clearly seen as 'the country of gender equality' – as a role model, as the first instance to turn to for the media's international comparisons or for civil society organisations when seeking information or making enquiries about cooperation. [...]" (The Handbook, 2018, p. 51)

in the presence of like-minded nations.[5] FFP supports Sweden's claim to self-esteem and recognition through its usefulness, relevance and added value, constituting subjectivity in an environment that emphasizes similarity (Browning, 2015, p. 204).

Furthermore, Sweden believes in being perceived as an *attractive country* for international collaboration regarding export control. The utilization of transitive verbs connects Sweden's internationally competitive technological development to its attractive country image, where the former '*contributes*'[6] to the latter. This connection also enhances Sweden's greater opportunity to influence international cooperation on export control, not only in the EU but also on an international scale. Notably, there are limited extracts indicating Sweden's image in terms of the export of arms.

Regarding the relations of power, Sweden's use of language highlights sexual and gender-based violence, the flow of small arms, and arms exports. Using nominalizations in this context demonstrates a lack of agency, which creates unclarity in terms of who the responsible actor is. For instance, Wallström (2017) states: 'Sexual violence, as a *weapon* of war, is a *horrendous manifestation* of the *oppression* of women.' Here, the word '*horrendous*' conveys undesirability, while there is a lack of agency due to the use of nominalizations such as '*weapon*', '*manifestation*' and '*oppression*', through which responsibility for the actions is missing.

However, the findings show that, through transitive verbs, Sweden is challenging unequal relations of power by claiming that gender and power are not given constructs. Instead, they are '*created*' and '*maintained*' across all sections of society.[7] At the UNSC, Sweden highlights the level of necessity and the degree of commitment by indicating that the member countries '*need to* acknowledge that sexual violence in conflict is a core

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[5] "The fact that Sweden has gone from gender equality to feminism is definitely something new, and can successfully be used exactly so in the work of the embassy. It has long been well known that Sweden champions gender equality issues, and we still do so – but now in the company of many other like-minded nations. However, having a feminist foreign policy clearly marks us out [...]" (The Handbook, 2018, p. 50)

[6] "An internationally competitive level of technological development contributes to Sweden continuing to be an attractive country for international cooperation. This also implies greater opportunities for Sweden to influence international cooperation on export control as part of an international partnership. While this applies principally within the EU, it can also be applied in a broader international context" (Government Communication, 2018, p. 11).

[7] "The Government's gender equality policy takes as its starting point the knowledge and understanding that gender and power are created and maintained structurally in all sections of society." (The Handbook, 2018, p. 8)

security *challenge* that *must* be kept on the agenda of the Security Council' (Skoog, 2015).[8]

Regarding the export of arms, the use of a transitive verb establishes a connection between the achievements gained through conducting a FFP and women's and girls' rights, representation, and resources, where the former '*strengthens*' the latter. Sweden presents a strong commitment to *preventing and counteracting* sexual violence by using modalities. An evaluative statement (Fairclough, 2003, p. 172) presents desirability, indicating that an important element to achieving women's and girls' rights, representation and resources is the '*strict*' control over the export of military equipment from Sweden.[9]

Analysis of Discursive Practice

The texts are produced discursively in order to achieve gender mainstreaming, communicate Sweden's brand through its FFP, and provide an account of Sweden's exports of military equipment. The Handbook of FFP, among the other texts, addresses Sweden's image extensively. The Handbook 'describes how Sweden's feminist foreign policy was launched, gathered pace, and was developed into a hallmark for Swedish dialogue in a world characterised by gender inequality' (2018, p. 9). Therefore, in a sense, the Handbook serves the purpose of promoting Sweden's image and FFP. Notably, it was electronically published in Spanish and Portuguese. The Handbook communicates Sweden's image to the outside world; it is intended to shape others' preferences (Nye, 2004, p. 11; Simons, 2015, p. 210), revealing Sweden's use of soft power through its FFP.

During an interview with France24, the interviewer Bertilson refers to FFP or the Handbook as Sweden's 'next big export',[10] comparing 'it' to globally known Swedish brands such as ABBA, IKEA and H&M. The context of the dialogue involves Sweden's

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[8] "...we need to acknowledge that sexual violence in conflict is a core security challenge that must be kept on the agenda of the Security Council. Particularly now, as the use of sexual violence has been taken to new horrific levels, where sexual violence is not only condoned, but openly commanded as a method of warfare." (Skoog, 2015)

[9] "By conducting a feminist foreign policy, the Government is endeavouring systematically to achieve outcomes that strengthen the rights, representation and resources of women and girls. The Government attaches great importance to preventing and counteracting sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and in communities in general. An important element of this work is the strict control of exports of military equipment from Sweden." (Government Communication, 2018, p. 8)

[10] "Bertilsson: yeah, you've even, you've even launched the handbook. A guide to how to make your own feminist foreign policy. Could this be Sweden's next big export, after H&M, IKEA and ABBA? I don't know. (France24, 2020: 2:57,0 - 3:59,1)

impact. Wallström's response emphasizes that 'it' is already making an impact, considering that other countries, such as Mexico, Canada and France, have introduced their own FFP.[11] This suggests that FFP, or the Handbook as a genre, expands Sweden's capacity to influence other countries as an instrument of soft power. Notably, the impact intended here can be interpreted as 'challenging gender inequality'.

The *interdiscursivity* of the texts demonstrates that FFP discursively draws from discourses on human rights[12] and democracy,[13] and that, in turn, it contributes discursively to achieving peace and security, cosmopolitanism and the communication of gender equality as a part of the Swedish image.[14] The adoption of the 'three Rs'[15] (rights, representation, and resources) in the language demonstrates FFP's positioning within the discourse of gender equality. In addition, the texts draw intertextually upon the WPS agenda,[16] Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),[17] and Arms Trade Treaty

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[11] "Wallström: Well, I think it has already started to make an impact and we've seen now that for example, a country like Mexico also introduced a feminist foreign policy... Canada and other countries and I think even here in France this is now a concept that is being used..." (France24, 2020: 2:57,0 - 3:59,1)

[12] "The feminist foreign policy is one of the foundations of my work – a starting point, analysis, method and perspective that permeates working for democracy, human rights and the rule of law in foreign policy. The feminist foreign policy is based on the principle of everyone's equal value and rights, everywhere and all the time. Ultimately, it is about non-discrimination, which is at the core of human rights. It's a good, useful way to communicate our work to protect and promote human rights." (The Handbook, 2018, p. 70)

[13] "And to me, feminist foreign policy or a feminist policy, a feminist government is really a part of strengthening democracy because women make up half of the population on this planet. And without women participating fully, enjoying fully human rights, I don't think democracy will thrive, of course." (Wallström, 2019)

[14] "One aspect of foreign policy involves promoting Swedish values and spreading the image of Sweden around the world. Gender equality is an important part of this image. Many Swedish embassies confirm that there is a great demand for information about how Sweden has achieved such a high degree of gender equality. Questions about Swedish society – including childcare, parental insurance and the proportion of women in the Swedish labour market – are asked regularly, and there is a clear interest in finding out more. " (The Handbook, 2018, p. 90)

15 "Although the definition of what constitutes a feminist foreign policy differs, the Swedish policy we'll hear more about is structured around three Rs —women's rights, representation, and resources—and commits to applying a systematic gender equality perspective across the entirety of the foreign policy agenda." (Wallström, 2019)

[16] "When Sweden joined the Security Council, we set out two overarching priorities: Conflict Prevention and Women, Peace and Security. In all our work in the Council, we have sought to operationalise the Women, Peace and Security agenda. For instance, through ensuring the inclusion of gender reporting in mission mandates and adding listing criterion for sexual and gender-based violence in sanctions regimes. We will continue this work, with commitment, not only on a day like this, but on every other day as well." (Wallström, 2017)

[17] "We welcome the call for improved controls and regulation as a means to reduce armed violence and achieve the 2030 Agenda. We welcome that the relationship between the international trade in arms and the Sustainable Development Goals is a theme in the Arms Trade Treaty." (Skau, 2017)

(ATT).[18] Also, the Handbook of FFP itself is used intertextually in Wallström's interview with France24. Different types of communicative events are mentioned, such as the trailer for the documentary 'The Feminister,' which follows the early stages of FFP, the crisis with Saudi Arabia in 2015 and the comments that Wallström received at the time regarding the incident.

Analysis of Social Practice

The discursive practices of these texts both challenge and reproduce the *order of discourse*. The texts discursively challenge the order of discourse by challenging gender inequality while contributing to the existing discourses of democracy, sustainable development, peace and security, and gender equality. The findings demonstrate an emphasis on change through achieving a 'paradigm shift' by including the previously neglected half of the population.[19] Additionally, the discursive practice of FFP includes its implications for the three Rs; it contributes to the existing discourse of the WPS agenda and gender equality.

In the context of both FFP and the export of military equipment, gender mainstreaming is emphasized. This includes Sweden's promotion of the role of women against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons,[20] and an insistence on gender-based budgets in the UNSC (Wallström, 2020). Additionally, the discursive practice challenges the power structures in the context of sexual and gender-based violence, which is referred to as a 'method of warfare' (Skoog, 2015). Swedish businesses are expected to be sustainable and responsible in their actions, both 'at home and abroad'[21] (Government Communication, 2018, p. 9). Nonetheless, the discursive practice reproduces the order of discourse by emphasizing the distinctive nature of trade, the

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[18] "Sweden has also promoted a gender equality perspective in processes on international weapons inspections and disarmament, such as the UN Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). The ATT is an important tool in the work to combat illicit and irresponsible trading in conventional weapons. Sweden is working for the application of the Arms Trade Treaty (article 7.4) and that state parties should take into account the risk of exported materials being used for – or facilitating – gender-based violence or violence against women or children." (The Handbook, 2018, p. 72)

[19] "A paradigm-shift is needed, sustainable development, peace and security can never be achieved if half the population is excluded." (Skoog, 2015)

[20] "Mainstreaming gender issues in small arms control efforts is of utmost importance in addressing the consequences of illicit arms flows" (Skau, 2017).

[21] There is a clear expectation from the Government's side that Swedish businesses must act sustainably and responsibly and take international guidelines on sustainable enterprise as the starting point for their work, at home and abroad" (Government Communication, 2018, p. 9)

EU common market and the needs of EU member states.[22] Noting the unnecessary disruption of the EU's internal market and the competitiveness of European companies,[23] there is a discursive contribution to the existing order of capitalism.

Accordingly, in terms of the export of military equipment to a third country, referring to a country outside of the EU, the country of origin gains significance. If the item has a predominantly Swedish identity, the discourse is shaped by Swedish identity and demonstrates a commitment to international agreements and law, to the UNSC, and the principles and objectives of Swedish foreign policy. Yet, if the item has a predominantly foreign identity, and if Sweden has a strong defence policy interest in the partnership, the discourse presents the possibility of applying the partner countries' export rules.[24] This reveals the reproduction of inside and outside dynamics, which enhances gender binaries (Robinson, 2019), and the interaction between ideals and interests. While the ideals are more significant when the item has a Swedish identity in terms of exports within the EU, the interests can be chosen in cases where the item has a foreign identity and the export is made to a third country, regardless of any conflict with Swedish foreign policy objectives.

Furthermore, in analysing the *social matrix of discourse*, Jezierska and Towns (2018) argue that gender equality was not a 'Swedish matter' until it began to be used as a distinguishing trait in the mid-1990s; however, it became a central component in Sweden's image and has evolved with the introduction of nation branding (2018, pp. 56–58). In addition, the Swedish nation is heavily invested in maintaining a reputation for being 'good at' gender equality, and consequently gender mainstreaming (Sjöstedt, Landén and Olofsdotter, 2016, p. 170). Gender mainstreaming refers to the strategy of striving to achieve gender equality goals, which Sweden started before the UN or the EU did the same (ibid., p. 169). Additionally, the texts refer to FFP being a 'smart

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[22] "The continued work on industry and market issues within the EU should therefore consider the distinctive nature of the military equipment market, and the need to meet the security interests of the Member States within the framework of the common market." (Government Communication, 2018, p. 11)

[23] "The export control measures required in the EU must, at the same time, be proportionate with regard to the risk of proliferation and not unnecessarily disrupt the internal market or the competitiveness of European companies." (Government Communication, 2018, p. 21)

[24] "In the case of cooperation with foreign partners, exports to third countries should be assessed in accordance with the Swedish guidelines if the item has a predominantly Swedish identity. If the item has a predominantly foreign identity, or if Sweden has a strong defence policy interest in the partnership, the export rules of the partner country may be applied." (Government Communication, 2018, p. 99)

practical policy' and a 'good thing itself',[25] which complies with Sweden's norm entrepreneurship, which is a valuable foreign policy strategy for small states (Björkdahl, 2013, p. 323). Norm entrepreneurs introduce new understandings of the right thing to do within the international community, and their normative influence is deemed critical for transforming the international normative architecture (ibid., p. 322). This can be seen in Sweden's foreign policy discourses in relation to FFP.

Additionally, feminism is not very often referred to in the texts. Here, Karlsson (2022, p. 325), whose study focuses on public diplomacy practitioners making sense of FFP, provides a useful perspective. Accordingly, public practitioners discursively enact certain meanings of FFP; for instance, by associating feminism with male practices and gender equality. They 'try to be nuanced everywhere all the time' and use simple examples, such as parental leave and equal pay (Karlsson, 2022, p. 330), since the meaning of feminism is ambiguous (also in Rosén Sundström et al., 2021; Karlsson, 2022, p. 330). The findings show that feminism is referred to in the texts; however, it is limited in comparison to gender equality. Childcare, parental insurance and the proportion of women in the Swedish labour market are also used as examples, but in the discursive context of gender equality, and the communication of Sweden's image.

Notably, the diplomatic crisis that occurred in 2015 between Sweden and Saudi Arabia presents a display of interactions between ideals and interests. Nordberg (2015) elaborates on the incident, in which the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Wallström, initially criticized Saudi Arabia's human rights record and the public flogging of Raif Madawi. In the aftermath, Wallström's invitation to the Arab League Summit in Cairo was withdrawn, as was Saudi Arabia's ambassador located in Sweden due to Sweden's decision not to renew its bilateral arms agreement with Saudi Arabia. In light of Swedish industry's stance against losing significant income from a break in relations with Saudi Arabia, Sweden sent a delegation to Saudi Arabia with letters from the then Prime Minister, Löfven, and King Carl XVI Gustaf, explaining that Wallström had not intended to criticize Islam and offering their official regrets for any misunderstanding. The Saudi ambassador to Sweden was then reinstated (ibid.). The following extract highlights Wallström's comment on the crisis in an interview:

> [...] I don't regret it and I think that we have since also used all our diplomatic tools so that we can have, you know, we can meet with mutual respect. We have different views on things and different policies, but we can still talk to each other. And this is – this is what we have done as well, and I think the fact that we were elected also unexpectedly

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[25] "Counteracting the systematic and global s subordination of women is a good thing in itself. However, it's also a smart practical policy." (The Handbook, 2018, p. 54)

to the Security Council shows that they also trust us and respect us back. (Wallström in France24, 2020: 7:34.0–8:13.9).

This extract shows that Sweden is recognized due to its election to the UNSC, based on the trust and respect that it believes it receives from its peers, and from the UNSC. The extract implies that Sweden's ability to communicate and its skills in managing the crisis with Saudi Arabia, even though they are on different pages, is what led to Sweden's recognition by the Council. This coincides with the concept of self-esteem which Sweden gained by succeeding in activities valued by actors whose opinions matter (Lebow, 2008, p. 61; Browning, 2015, p. 199).

Conclusion

This paper has explored the relationship between Sweden's sense of security and its nation branding in foreign policy discourses through two contradictory implementations: Swedish FFP and the export of arms. The paper aimed to examine Sweden's image in terms of these praxes, and the relations of power, and argue Sweden's sense of security in the following. The diplomatic crisis that occurred in 2015 between Sweden and Saudi Arabia was emphasized as an example to support the research question. To serve its purpose, CDA was chosen as a methodological approach for this paper, and the sampled data consisted of seven texts based on the purposive sampling technique.

By combining Fan's conceptual framework and the concept of recognition, this paper has distinguished recognition based on how a nation believes itself to be perceived (construed image) from how it is actually perceived (actual image). Overall, the findings demonstrate that its FFP strengthened Sweden's construed image, which is Sweden being the *champion of gender equality*. Additionally, FFP contributed to Sweden's communication of the *champion of equality* image. The country's desired image refers to being a *role model* for gender equality, which is the image that Sweden would like other nations to hold in the future. Additionally, The Handbook of FFP, as a genre, contains features of a soft power instrument that aims to shape others' preferences (Nye, 2004, p. 11; Simons, 2015, p. 210). In terms of exporting arms, Sweden's image relates to it being perceived as an *attractive country*. Sweden's internationally competitive technological development contributes to this image and to Sweden's ability to influence other countries regarding exports, which also complies with soft power.

The textual analysis showed that FFP marks Sweden out among its peers; it creates relevance for Sweden. Hence, this paper argues that FFP fortifies Sweden's sense of

security. Sweden discursively challenges unequal relations of power and emphasizes gender mainstreaming in the context of sexual and gender-based violence. However, the findings show that there is an interaction between ideals and interests in terms of exporting military equipment to EU member countries or to third countries. While ideals are discursively associated with Swedish identity, the findings show that Sweden's strong defence policy interests may outweigh its ideals in the absence of a predominant Swedish identity. This reveals that different practices between the inside and outside discursively enhance and reproduce gender binaries.

Lastly, it is argued that, in a globalized world, recognition and self-esteem are claimed through one's usefulness, relevance and added value in an environment that emphasizes similarity (Browning, 2015, p. 204). This paper has provided an analysis based on this argument. However, recently, there have been changes in Sweden's foreign policy, with the abandonment of FFP and the initiation of a process to seek NATO membership. Here, it is important to invite future studies to further explore the question of whether states' primary concerns are about their individuality being recognized, or about seeking territorial and physical security (Browning, 2015, p. 211).

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Appendix

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Translating gender in queer literature: The case of queer poetry translated from Portuguese to Greek

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Abstract

This article explores approaches to the translation of queer elements of discourse in literature, focusing on the translation of grammatical gender in queer poetry, from Portuguese to Greek. Within this research, translation is framed as discourse production that, whilst producing translated texts in the target language, may also reproduce gender stereotypes and assumptions in it and by it, even where grammatical gender is conventionally used in, or even omitted from, the source text. By reviewing how grammatical gender may be used in these two languages, both according to grammar conventions and in inclusive or gender-activist communication settings, an array of questions and strategies relating to translation is explored. Translation problems are then linked with gender theory, from which the concept of a 'queer translation project' emerges, which sets the framework for examining the translation of grammatical gender in queer Brazilian poems translated for the Greek literary magazine frear (2023). This analysis shows that grammatical gender, apart from being arbitrarily assigned and an inherent part of the morphology of each language, can also be a significant element of discourse that it is essential to maintain in the translated text. In conclusion, it shows that a queer translation project, which is not only limited to the translation of queer literature, needs to reflect upon discourse elements such as grammatical gender, even if the latter is seemingly used conventionally, or omitted. This article situates translation as a tool for the critical examination of gender in discourse and calls for further research in language combinations where grammatical gender shows up differently.

Keywords: translation studies, queer literature, grammatical gender, gender theory, queer translation project

Introduction: Queering grammatical gender, queering the translations of grammatical gender

Is gender expressed in queer literature in a way that poses particular challenges for translation? If so, what could the translation of grammatical gender as expressed in queer literature teach us about the way we translate gender? These questions were in my mind while translating queer Brazilian poetry into Greek for the literary magazine frear (2023). The issue, curated by the author Giota Tempridou, aimed to present different aspects of queer literature expressed in the Greek language. Queer poetry expressed in Greek through translation would also form part of this endeavour, so one more question ensued: could the proper act of translating queer literature be accomplished through a queer lens? By writing this paper, my purpose is to bring together translation and gender studies, drawing from the very specific and rich field of the translation of queer literature in order to approach the above questions.

Specifically, this research focuses on translations from Portuguese to Greek, two languages that, by their linguistic morphology, denote grammatical gender in different ways. Whilst I talk about grammatical gender in particular, it is important to note that Greek uses three genders (masculine, feminine and neutral) (Karanikolas et al., 1999: 71), while Portuguese uses two (masculine and feminine) (Figueiredo and Ferreira, 1973: 180). In both languages, words related to nouns (adjectives, participles, articles etc.) change their form (are inflected), to ensure that the grammatical gender between them and the noun is in agreement (Giannopoulou, 2012). It is worth noting that the grammatical gender of nouns is arbitrary and may or may not be the same across languages (ibid.): for example, the word 'wall' is masculine in Greek (ο τοίχος) but feminine in Portuguese (a parede).

Despite the fact that the number of grammatical genders is different between the two languages, masculine grammatical gender is used in both languages to denote universality, general statements and shared experience common to all humankind (ibid.; Colaço Mäder and Melo Moura, 2015: 33). It has been argued that masculine gender is the 'unmarked form' of a word, meaning the form of a word that is simple, generic and relatively neutral in terms of meaning (Cameron in Simon, 1996: 18). However, the generic use of masculine gender has received the critique that it is so persistent that it erases female and otherwise non-male-identifying experience from discourse (Giannopoulou, 2012; Colaço Mäder and Melo Moura, 2015: 33). In fact, it could be argued that it is not only the non-male-identifying experience that is being erased, but also its very potentiality: the generic use of masculine grammatical gender has been shown to lead to cognitive bias, since language users often tend to come to

think of women or non-binary people as not included in descriptions using a generic masculine, and subsequently to not identify with these words if they themselves are not male-identifying (see, among others, Silveira, 1980; Hamilton, 1988; Redl et al., 2022). Considerations of this kind highlight the fact that language production has the power to create and reproduce perceptions, stereotypes and ideologically charged meanings, or, in Simon's words, 'language intervenes actively in the creation of meaning. [...] [It] does not simply "mirror" reality; it contributes to it' (1996: 8). In the present paper, translation is also treated as a form of discourse production, a linguistic act that not only transfers meaning but is prone to produce, or re-produce, through the language it uses, modes and stereotypes in the target language.

In light of the above, when it comes to the use of gender in language, a number of inclusive language techniques have been experimented with by speakers, as well as by institutions. As an example, it is worth mentioning the inclusive communication guidelines issued by the Council of the European Union (2018), where it is expressly stated that the use of the generic masculine pronoun is to be avoided (ibid.: 7). Instead of this, specifically in the Portuguese language it is recommended to use tactics of neutralization or abstraction (not specifying gender by using collective, generic or abstract terms, by changing the grammatical structure if possible, etc.) or of specification (explicitly mentioning both grammatical genders) (Conselho da União Europeia, 2018: 7). In the case of Greek, EU guidelines for gender-neutral language state that the generic use of masculine gender can be avoided by the use of plural instead of singular number, passive instead of active voice, the addition of the words 'men and women', and the use of periphrasis, among others (European Parliament, 2018: 10–12).

Apart from this institutional framework, responding to the need for more inclusive language and gender mainstreaming, speakers, activists and writers have experimented, in both languages, with a variety of possible ways to talk about feminine, queer and non-binary experience, moving away from the use of a generic masculine while also taking into account the kinds of experience that do not conform to two grammatical genders. Among the various techniques employed to this end, it is worth noting the use of the female gender as inclusive (see: 'the Greek writers, female and male', Alexandra K* in Zefkili, 2023), the introduction of alternative gender terminations, even symbols (such as -@-) (Tempridou, 2023; Santos, 2021), the use of neutral grammatical gender in Greek (Tempridou, 2023) and even the introduction of neutral grammatical gender in Portuguese, in the form of pronouns and terminations (e.g. elu, amigue, menine) (Santos, 2021).

It is also worth noting that these are not standalone examples or experiments in Portuguese and in Greek, but may be thought of as pertaining to a whole constellation

of gender-conscious, gender-creative (and gender-bending) writing that can be traced within several languages in which grammatical gender is inscribed in their morphology. Perhaps one of the most characteristic historical examples of this direction is the works of Hélène Cixous, who became famous for her call for a 'feminine writing' (Cixous, 1976), and whose self-writing and self-translations often shook the general use of masculine gender in French as she coined new, feminine-gender words, or even onomatopoeias. It can be easily understood that the multiplicity of grammatical and stylistic gender-bending practices require a heightened sense of interpretation sensibility and attention on the part of the translator, as soon they come across them.

The diversity described above in the uses of grammatical gender in language and its multiple implications, which are not exclusively lexical or strictly linguistic, can also pose a series of questions to the translator: If a text does not use masculine grammatical gender to denote universality, could this be by chance, because the very use of grammatical gender is not pertinent to its context? Might it be possible that it is an attempt at gender-inclusive or gender-neutral language? Could it also be an example of a queer text? Or could it be that we are confronted with a text that, rather than declaring its potentially queer character, by omitting to denote gender can call for, or even allow, queer readings?

Of course, in order to approach gender through translation, it is also important to examine how it is approached within translation theory. Sherry Simon (1996: 16–17) notes that 'gender is not normally considered a "significant" element of language for translation'. Simon further explains that this approach is due to the fact that, as discussed above, grammatical gender is embedded in the morphology of each language, and thus has been considered an essential structural component in each case, bearing no deeper significance. Nevertheless, she proceeds to point out that it has been shown that grammatical gender may acquire significance when used in poetry and mythology, rather than in strictly instrumental or communicative settings (Jakobson in Simon, 1996: 16–17). In these cases, grammatical gender takes on a symbolic meaning, and might be linked to the mythological qualities of persons, deities or values, which makes it essential for it to be taken into account when translating (ibid.).

The importance of gender in translation and the translation of gender is part of the cultural turn in translation studies (see Snell-Horby, 1988), which shifted the focus from the strictly linguistic mechanics and how-to's of translation to the ways in which factors of cultural significance interact with it; for example, by being present or represented in translation, or produced and reproduced by it. In this framework, it is important to acknowledge the contributions of feminist translations. According to von Flotow (1991), feminist translations tend to declare themselves as such, thus foregrounding the intention of the translator, and conceptualizing the 'translator's

fidelity' in a non-traditional way, which brings to the surface any gender bias implicit in the source text. Even though von Flotow's approach is not limited to grammatical gender, as this article means to do, it is important to highlight that the practices that she brings forward (supplementing, prefacing and footnoting, and hijacking) (ibid.: 74–80), may also be useful in the translation of grammatical gender through a feminist, or even queer, lens. While the first two practices might be self-explanatory (the translator supplements missing genders or gender-related connections and visibilities, and they preface or comment on their translations, stating the scope of their political views and interventions), it might be useful to insist on text-hijacking. In this case, the translator deliberately intervenes in the meaning of the source text, appropriating and re-writing it in order to reflect her own political intentions (ibid.: 79–80). As mentioned above, feminist translations, and feminist translators, generally overtly declare these creative and more often than not ideologically-driven interventions. This transparency of intentions locates – or, more accurately, in Haraway's words, 'situates' (Haraway, 1991) – the agency of the translator and the final product of their work in a context of broad political, personal and ideological connections, rather than claiming a universality of faith and equivalence independent of any context, time or place.

When we approach the translation of queer poetry, as well as the queer translation of poetry, the situated knowledges of the translator and their personal sense of agency emerge as an important factor in their approach, along with their understanding of the multiple expressions of gender through language. A translator, as a situated individual, can be understood as not having access to any objective kind of truth, reading or interpretation, but as someone who is able to employ their agency for the rendering of the source text into the target language. The context in which the translator and their translation is situated is also linked with the goal, objective or skopos (Reiss & Vermeer, 2021) of their translation. This intention matrix within which a translation is registered has also been defined as a 'project' by the translation theorist Antoine Berman: 'Every significant translation is grounded in a project, in an articulated goal. This project is determined by both the position of the translator and by the specific demands of the work to be translated' (Bermanin Simon, 1996: 34–35). In the case of the feminist project of translation, it has been argued that it 'finds its most felicitous applications in regard to texts which are themselves innovative writing practices' (Simon, 1996: 15).

In this vein, could it be possible to conceive a queer translation project? Similarly to a feminist translation project, we could argue that where the queer translation project finds its own most felicitous applications is in relation to texts that are themselves queer. A queer translation project applied to the translation of queer literature would consider the breadth of queerness, not restraining itself in the understanding, interpretation or translation of the subject matter or in the overt expression of the queer experience, but

also tracing the queer use of writing style and expressions, including slight (or not so slight) diversions from the canonical use of grammatical gender. Further to that, a queer translation project could also apply to other genres and contexts, as long as it constructed a translational approach that was attentive to the inscriptions of queer and gender-related experience in discourse.

Having said all that, it is also useful to highlight that the project of a translation is not unchanged in time. Perhaps viewing translation in light of Derridaean différance (1982), as a continual construction of differentiated meanings, influenced by a variety of factors both changing and postponing (deferring) a final textual meaning, might also contribute to our understanding of a translation project as a set of factors and parameters that have a 'horizon' (Berman in Simon, 1996: 34–35). The fact that the parameters will eventually change does not mean that a translation project will cease to be situated: rather, the changing horizon of a translation project is the reason why re-translations are made possible and, at times, necessary (ibid.).

This paper examines a specific translation project, which aimed to bring queer Brazilian poetry into the Greek language for the needs of a magazine issue dedicated to queer literature itself. The translations that are analysed were produced with this specific context in mind, enabling queer approaches to translation theory and practice. While we examine specific examples related to the translation of grammatical gender more closely, it will be useful to keep this context in mind, as well as the fact that the following remarks are largely an attempt at self-reflection, given that the author of this article was also the translator of the poems (Vlachou, 2023).

Materials and method

In order to approach the question of how grammatical gender in queer poems can be translated, and hopefully to offer useful remarks regarding the translation of grammatical gender more broadly, this chapter focuses on some of the translated queer poems in the aforementioned anthology in frear magazine (Tempridou, 2023). The poems were selected based on the different ways in which they handle grammatical gender; in all cases, the translation was made from the original Portuguese into Greek. Special focus is given to a poem particularly rich in pertinent stylistic choices, entitled 'Girassol da madrugada' (Morning sunflower), by Mário de Andrade. Material discussed in the two texts that supported the translations, prefacing and commenting on the translating process, has also been widely employed (Vlachou, 2023).

The methodological approach to the analysis of the materials draws initially from translation studies. Comparative analysis (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1972), which juxtaposes the original and the translated text in order to compare the translational modifications or changes that meaning, structure and form have gone through, is an important tool, because it is grounded in the structural and morphological components of the language. However, I apply it in specific ways when it comes to grammatical gender, while also taking into consideration the theory of equivalence (Nida, 1964a), whereby the equivalence of meaning can be perceived not only as lexical or morphological, but also as dynamic, in cases where the translation causes a similar emotional response in the reader as was evoked by the original text.

However, since these theories are thoroughly grounded in the text, and translations have been already approached as situated within contexts, broader projects, and also performed by similarly situated individuals with their own agency, instead of assuming dynamic equivalence as a method that can pinpoint universal, or generic, emotional responses, I conceptualize it as responding to the intentions of this specific translation project, which is: to translate queer poetry as queer poetry, from Portuguese into Greek. This approach introduces an element of affect theory to the methodology, while also echoing Antoine Berman's translation theory (or, even, project), of translating the Other as Other in the target language, thus making of the target language a 'shelter' to host the Other (Berman, 2002).

Yet, of course, all of the examples are taken from translations that have already been concluded and published. It is to be expected that potential problems and failings will also come up, hopefully broadening the spectrum of these questions.

Analysis

Beloved, he-loved/ undo, re-do

A reading of the ten translated poems making up the anthology in frear magazine (Vlachou, 2023) shows from the outset that queer experience is inscribed in the language they use, albeit not in the same way. Themes vary, as we shift from love poems (e.g., 'Κύμα' / Onda) to coming-out poems (e.g., 'γυναίκα μετά' / mulher depois); styles vary, from sonnets (e.g., 'Ηχώ'/ Eco) to free verse (e.g., 'η σόνια' / a sônia); linguistic expression varies so much that it becomes difficult, even impossible, to pinpoint a 'canon' of queer writing – an impossibility that I regard as fortuitous, because the purpose of the special issue was never to canonize queer literature. While,

in the case of certain poets, it is known that they themselves were LGBTQI+ (Machado and Moura, 2017) (even though it cannot always be confirmed that they would have used these exact terms to define themselves), in other cases the personal orientation of the poet is unknown. If, in the case of writing as an African writer, without perpetuating colonialist perspectives, the South African Nobel prize-winner in Literature Nadine Gordimer stressed the importance of viewing the world from Africa (Bassnett, 1993/2011: 123), then the poems in this anthology were not chosen due to the sexual or gender orientation of their authors, but rather because they offer a queer perspective, they are written through a queer lens.

In certain cases, the queer perspective is offered by the subject matter alone. For example, Angelica Freitas' 'epílogo' (Freitas, 2021: 36) (epilogue; translated into Greek as 'επίλογος', Vlachou, 2023) sets the lyrical subject in a dream, surrounded by well-known lesbian and bisexual authors such as Gertrude Stein, in an imagined encounter with Ezra Pound, who throws in homophobic remarks. In the original text, we trace grammatical gender in adjectives that are inflected to be in accordance with the female nouns ('Gertrude' – 'zangada' / Gertrude – angry) (ibid., line 8). In this case, grammatical gender is not employed in order to express some specific facet of the queer experience; therefore, in this translational context grammatical gender can be considered unmarked (in the sense of a form with 'a general neutrality of meaning') (Cameron in Simon, 1996: 18) and not treated as a stylistic choice of the poetess that needs to be equally traceable in the translated text.

On the other hand, grammatical gender is present in a more pronounced way in Caio Fernando Abreu's 'Rômulo' (Abreu, 2012: 87–88) (translated into Greek as 'Ρόμουλο', Vlachou, 2023): this poem talks about a homosexual couple, following them on a summer night in Copacabana and then taking the reader to the day, years later, when one of the men, Rômulo, dies, while the other, unnamed, receives the news of his passing through the morning newspaper. The fact that masculine grammatical gender is used throughout this poem is one of the stylistic characteristics making it completely clear that both lovers are men. If taken into consideration within the rather conservative context when the poem was written, in the middle of the 1980s, during what was later called the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and the moral panic that ensued, the use of masculine gender here is of particular expressive (and, one could argue, political) importance. This poem showcases that the consistent use of masculine gender in queer literature is not necessarily a simple reproduction of the generic masculine grammatical gender, but is very probably a deliberate choice, closely tied to the text's Weltanschauung. Interestingly, this turns masculine grammatical gender into a marked element of the phrase (pinpointing the very specific rather than describing the generic) rather than an unmarked one; in this fragment, masculine gender is not about the

morphology of the language, but rather an essential element for the construction of meaning and an important stylistic choice. For this reason, if we were tempted to proceed to a Greek translation that would aspire to 'trouble' the grammatical gender of this text, either driven by gender-neutral guidelines for inclusive language or by activist approaches that would apply feminine or neutral grammatical gender in the translation, inspired by text-hijacking, we would miss an equivalence that represents a key building block in the construction of this poem.

Let us take, for example, the line 'vestíamos inteirinhos de branco' (ibid., line 7), which would roughly translate into English as 'we were dressed in white from head to toe'. From a reading standpoint, it is worth noting that the construction of this phrase reveals the gender of the lovers in Portuguese, but not in the given English translation, since participles are not subject to gender inflection in English. Were we to maintain an equivalence of meaning and information provided, this phrase could be translated into Greek as 'φορούσαμε λευκά από πάνω ως κάτω' [literally: we were wearing white (clothes) from head to toe]; and that would suffice. However, since the equivalences that a queer translation project aspires to attain include the traceability of allusions, however slight, to the queer experience inscribed in the language of the original text, this rendering would not be ideal. For this reason, the solution I opted for was: 'από πάνω ως κάτω ήμαστε ντυμένοι στα λευκά' [literally: from head to toe we came dressed in white]. Since gender is denoted in participles in Greek, in this case 'we came dressed' makes it clear that it refers to male-identifying persons (also see Vlachou, 2023).

A third example that is worth examining is the case of a poem where grammatical gender is carefully omitted. In Mario de Andrade's 'Girassol da madrugada' (de Andrade in Biblioteca Digital da Literatura Maranhense, n.d.) ('Morning sunflower', translated into Greek as 'Πρωινό ηλιοτρόπιο', Vlachou, 2023), a modernist love poem that the lyrical subject addresses to their beloved, the object of their passion remains persistently undeclared. Instead of using names, or even specific descriptions of the physical appearance of the beloved, a series of metaphors is employed: the beloved is called 'contemplação' (contemplation) (line 2), 'flor de girassol' (sunflower) (line 7) and 'lagoa' (lake) (line 61). Even though all of these nouns are feminine, it is interesting that hardly any adjectives are used and, in the rare cases where they are, the poet chooses adjectives that maintain the same form in both masculine and feminine grammatical gender (e.g. 'grande'/ big, great) (line 25). The omission of any articles in the addresses to the beloved also avoids giving any further clues about their gender; as for personal pronouns, the ones used are 'te', 'ti', 'você', 'tu' (to you/you) (see lines 2, 4, 10, 23 for the first appearance of each word, respectively), which by their morphology do not denote gender, as 'ele' (he/him) or 'ela' (she/her) would have. To confuse matters even

more, in the fragment where the lyrical subject counts the number of loves they have had in the past, while two of them are registered as women ('donzela', 'senhora'/ young lady, mature lady) (lines 44 and 46, respectively), one more again has their gender carefully obscured by the metaphorical use of masculine-gender nouns ('eclipse, boi'/ eclipse, calf) (line 45). But perhaps the most interesting element lies in the poem's dedication, which reads 'a R.G.' (to R.G.), the initials of an unknown person. The traces to the gender of this person have also been hidden: rather than writing 'ao R.G.' or 'à R.G.', for a male or female person respectively, as Portuguese grammar rules would normally dictate, since proper nouns are preceded by definite articles, the poet omits the article, as would be the case in the names of historical figures. If we follow Gayatri Spivak's approach to translation, by surrendering to the nuances of the text (Spivak, 1993), we realize that we are met with the construction of a persistent sense of vagueness regarding the gender of the beloved. This vagueness is achieved by means of rich stylistic choices that enable the omission of grammatical gender, in the context of a poem so rich in expressive materials that it makes it rather unlikely that elements of this sort would have been left to their fate.

For whom was that poem written? Who is the dedication to? Sadly, this might never be known, since Manuel Bandeira, Brazilian poet and close friend of Mario de Andrade, had this part of the text concealed (Mott, n.d.), as he did with one letter of the correspondence the two modernists exchanged, which is believed to contain intimate details about de Andrade's sexuality (Decia, 1997). Other excerpts from their correspondence hint at it, as he explains to Bandeira that he would like to experiment with his writing style in order to talk about homosexuality in an oblique manner (Mott, n.d.). Apart from that, Bandeira himself, commenting on the poem 'Girassol da madrugada', advises de Andrade to omit certain fragments, including references to a blond young Spanish man (Decia 1997). Other theories about R.G.'s identity allude to a chronicle that de Andrade wrote in the same year he composed 'Girassol da madrugada', in which he lamented the fact that his shoe shiner had abandoned him and how lost he felt without him (Mott, n.d.). Certainly, the latter serves to underline the insistence of the attempts to identify R.G. more than it sheds any light on anything at all about their real identity.

In an interview with Jornal da USP (Prado, 2022), Eliane Robert Moraes, editor of Seleta Erótica de Mário de Andrade (Erotic Selection of Mário de Andrade), expresses no doubt about the poet's homosexuality, even though she states that historically it has been difficult for people to accept it, since he is linked with the 'Brazilian cause' (ibid.). The capacity to accept non-heteronormative expressions of gender and sexual identity by figures historically connected with the construction of the national identity emerges here as a challenging enterprise, even when it comes from the literary figure who linked

the fluidity of gender to the construction of a (national?) hero in his work Macunaíma. All that having been said, the sexual identity of the writer was not the criterion by which the poems for frear's anthology were selected. The question that I seek to pose here is not whether or not Mário de Andrade was homosexual, but what the ambiguities regarding the gender of the lovers in 'Girassol da madrugada', expressed textually and extra-textually, imply for the translation of the poem into a language such as Greek, with its three grammatical genders. Should this ambiguity be maintained, and if so, how?

In the context of the 'queer translation project' that I have set, and in light of the above analysis, this gender ambiguity, which manages to inscribe the poem's discourse in a non-heteronormative context, allowing for queer readings, is not viewed as arbitrary. The question now is how to render this ambiguity into the target language, starting with the dedication. As in Portuguese, in Greek proper nouns are also preceded by definite articles, which denote grammatical gender. Unlike in Portuguese, in Greek there is no exception to this rule, not even for famous, mythical or historical figures. For this reason, in order to maintain the gender ambiguity present in 'a R.G.', I opted for what Vinay and Darbelnet (1972) would have called 'modulation': a change in the point of view from the source to the target language. Avoiding the structure 'στον Ρ. Γκ.' (to he-R.G.) or 'στην Ρ. Γκ.' (to she-R.G.), which would maintain the syntax of the original text but not the gender ambiguity, I opted for 'με αφιέρωση: Ρ. Γκ.' (with a dedication: R.G.), which manages to introduce the same ambiguity (Vlachou, 2023). However, the structure of the translated text is quite a peculiar way to write a dedication, something that, hopefully, a well-intentioned reader will interpret as a queering of the target language, or would justify as 'the decision of the translator to lose in order to win' (Ioannidou, 2021: 265). Still, because the present article also serves as a reflection that seeks to identify past mistakes, it would be fitting to propose one more solution to this conundrum: perhaps a more flowing alternative – equally accurate and faithful to the queer translation project – would be 'Ρ. Γκ., αφιερωμένο' [R.G., dedicated (to you)]. It could be argued that this option flows more naturally, since in Greek it sounds like a direct address to R.G. Even so, it does not avoid changing the point of view of the original text. A decision to win in order to lose needs to be made again, grounded in a translation practice that takes into consideration the queer translation project.

When it came to the corpus of the poem, we could not avoid some attempt to use the guidelines for gender-inclusive and gender-neutral language, in the hope that they might offer some strategic tools. That said, it is clear that guidelines of this kind are largely issued with institutional settings and texts in mind, not literature, and for this reason the tools they offer have limited application in this case. For example, in the

context of a poem, it would be unthinkable to omit all adjectives or participles for the sake of abstraction, since it would gravely impact upon the style. However, Greek grammar offers some options that are useful for language abstraction; for example, two-termination adjectives, i.e. adjectives that share one common ending for masculine and feminine grammatical gender (as opposed to three-termination adjectives, which differentiate between all three grammatical genders), would be helpful in our pursuit of gender ambiguity in the target language. Useful as this might have been, in the end it was not necessary to apply this technique in the translation. By chance and sheer luck, the personal pronouns that would be the word-by-word translations of the ones used in the original text also do not reveal grammatical gender in Greek (for example, compare 'te olho como se deve olhar' and 'σε βλέπω έτσι όπως πρέπει να σε βλέπουν', my emphasis) (de Andrade in BDLM, n.d., line 2 and Vlachou, 2023, line 2, respectively).

It is also worth noting that, although the nouns that de Andrade uses metonymically to call the beloved are largely feminine-ending in the original, it has already been argued that they do not provide enough clues to assume that the gender of the beloved is feminine. Therefore, the goal was to maintain their significance, as a priority, and their grammatical gender as a secondary goal. The arbitrariness of grammatical gender can be seen very clearly in nouns: while 'flor' (flower) is feminine in Portuguese, it could be either neutral ('λουλούδι') or masculine ('ανθός') in Greek; on the other hand, 'lagoa' (lake) is feminine in both languages ('λίμνη').

Curiously, a particularly challenging line was not a semantically difficult one; it was, quite simply 'És grande por demais para que sejas só felicidade' (You are too great to only be happiness) (line 25). If I had treated grammatical gender as unmarked and had interpreted the poem as a strictly heterosexual love poem, the Greek translation would be 'Είσαι πολύ μεγάλη για να είσαι μόνο ευτυχία', stating the poetic object as feminine. However, it was clear that, in the context of a queer translation, the use of an adjective would not be helpful in this particular line because it would have necessarily declared grammatical gender, so again we opted for modulation: 'Εσύ είσαι μέγα μέγεθος, δεν μπορεί να 'σαι μοναχά ευτυχία!' (You are the greatest great, you can't be only happiness). This change in the point of view also comes with the introduction of a maximalist writing style that only works because it matches Andrade's own maximalism. Had I been translating a more minimalist poem, this option would not have worked. This highlights the fact that the queer translation project is not an approach that ignores all the stylistic and expressive techniques of the original text except for the inscriptions of gender and queer-related experience in discourse. Rather, what a queer translation aspires to do is to introduce the element of gender and queer-related discourse to the already existing questions and challenges faced by a translator,

and to search for techniques and methods to approach them. Thus, a queer translation project is not meant to be limited to the translation of queer literature.

'Girassol da madrugada', although rare in its particularity, being a love poem that by its writing style remains open – but not strictly limited – to queer readings, offers a rich field for observations regarding queer writing and queer translation. Similarly to Bersianik's observation that 'to undo a linguistic system and a western philosophical tradition in which women have been continually subdued and silenced by patriarchal law and by a male-oriented grammar and lexicon that have alienated them from their own history' (Gould in Simon, 1996: 16), it is helpful to think that queer writing can be achieved, from a stylistic perspective, in a way that undoes linguistic restrictions, systems and traditions, and where the gender binary is not only culturally but also linguistically prevalent. While a queer translation project would be able to trace the particular expressive means employed by queer writing and to creatively render them into the target language, and even though the intention to maintain some kind of equivalence has been mentioned more than once, it is also worth considering that a queer translation project could go further than Nida's theory of equivalence. Rather than eliciting an emotional response from the reader, queer writing, as seen in 'Girassol da madrugada', can create a textual space where queer, gender-inclusive or generally non-heteronormative readings are possible, yet not necessarily overtly dictated. In these cases, tracing the limits of the language of the original text by practising Spivak's act of surrendering to it (1993), would be more useful for queer translation than seeking an elusive sense of equivalence, which, as discussed, can never be objective. As we have shown, treating grammatical gender as a marked, meaningful constituent of the text, rather than a mere matter of morphology, is a step in this direction, which may help greatly in the translation of queer literature and in the queer translation of literature. While there will always be a final text in the target language, keeping a queer translation project in mind helps the translator to take note of minor decision-making and previously unnoticed changes during the translation process, keeping them attentive to what Athena Athanasiou (2020) has called the 'trans' in translation.

Conclusion

In my attempt to showcase the particularities of translating gender in queer literature, but also, potentially, queering the translation of gender in literature, I have remained focused on the question of grammatical gender. This article has demonstrated that grammatical gender in queer literature is not a mere morphological feature, but rather a marked category, or else an element of semantic significance in translation, and that

it can be treated in various ways depending on the context, the scope of the translation (the translation project) and the translator's own agency as a situated individual. By conceptualizing a translational approach that is sensitive to the inscription of gender and queer-related experience in language, including but not limited to grammatical gender, which was defined as 'a queer translation project', I argued that these thoughts and approaches can be applied to the translation of any kind of text, not only queer literature. Hence, translation emerges as a tool for the critical examination of gender, as it is inscribed in discourse. Even though this research focused on translations from Portuguese into Greek, it made it clear that different challenges, as well as approaches and strategies, may emerge in language combinations with different morphologies. This calls for further research at the crossroads between translation and gender studies, within the context of a queer translation project.

Acknowledgements

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An exploratory study into the reasons why women students are not choosing construction related-degrees in Ireland

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Abstract

Despite recent efforts by both the Irish Government and the Irish construction industry to recruit more women into construction, women are still distinctly underrepresented in many areas of the industry. The aim of this paper is to undertake an investigation into the main reasons why women students are not choosing construction related degrees in Ireland.

A mixed-methods approach was adopted for the research including both a desk top study and case study analysis. The case study chosen was of registration numbers at Technological University Dublin during the period 2015 – 2023.

The key findings show that there are a number of reasons why women students may not pursue a career in this industry. These include the work/life balance that the career will provide, the poor image the construction industry has as a possible place of work, lack of specific career guidance on this industry, students' lack of confidence and parental influences.

While the results suggest that there are several key reasons why women secondary school students so not choose construction related degrees, the research also examines potential ways to reduce the impact of such obstacles. Recommendations include highlighting women within the industry as role models, increasing knowledge of the industry among teachers and career guidance counsellors, and increasing the provision of Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects in schools.

Key words: gender, construction, student choices, degree, Ireland

Introduction

Despite recent efforts by both the Irish Government and the Irish construction industry to recruit more women into construction, women are still distinctly underrepresented in many areas of the industry. A contributing factor for this is the low number of women students choosing construction related degrees as options following the Leaving Certificate. We note that for purposes of this research "construction related degrees/courses" include Building Surveying, Quantity Surveying and Construction Management.

Men vs Women Students

There is an abundance of research available demonstrating that men and women students differ widely when it comes to deciding their field of study in higher education. Men are more likely to choose subjects such as engineering, maths or science whereas women are more likely to choose subjects such as humanities, education and the arts. This is down to a number of factors including gender stereotypes (Finger et al, 2020; Bigelow et al, 2015; IWISH, 2021; CIF, 2018; Knight et al, 2011; Sewalk and Nietfeld, 2013), cultural stereotypes (Xie, Fang et al. 2015, Jacob et al. 2020, Barone 2011, OECD 2015, Finger et al. 2020) and perceived gender specific cognitive abilities (Kugler et al. 2021, Bigelow et al. 2015).

Women in Construction

According to the Central Statistics Office (CSO) (2023), the construction industry is the seventh largest contributor to job creation in Ireland, with 171,000 people being employed in the industry as of Q3 2022. It has long been discussed that the industry is facing a skills shortage (Ireland, 2022). The Construction Industry Federation's (CIF) Demand for Skills in Construction to 2020 (2016) report noted that, by 2020 the industry would need an additional 76,000 personnel with almost 36,000 of these being skilled craftspersons. Having 114,000 people employed in the construction industry in Q1 2016 (CSO, NACE Rev. 2) this would mean that by 2020 the industry would need to number 190,000. However, the CSO states that, in Q1 of 2020 there were only 147,700 people employed, representing a deficit of 42,300 (CSO, NACE Rev. 2).

As noted in the Table 1 below, women make up 9.2% of people employed in the construction industry in Ireland as of 2022. This percentage has been slowly increasing over the last several years.

Table 1. Employment in the Irish construction industry by sex 2011, 2015, 2019, 2022

	2011		2015		2019		2022	
	Total (000s)	% Women	Total (000s)	% Women	Total (000s)	% Women	Total (000s)	% Women
Construction	88.4	6.2	110.6	5.3	149.8	7.9	171	9.2

CSO NACE Rev 2 Economic Sector (CSO 2023)

According to the Women can build report, this is in line with other European Union member states, with Germany, Spain, Italy and Portugal also having 9% women employed in the industry (Erasmus+ 2020). While these rising numbers are welcomed, it needs to be noted that the roles held by women in the construction industry are predominately in administration, finance, HR and marketing. Up to 97% of women in the industry work within these roles with only 1% having an on site role (CIF 2018). This would mean that of the 171,000 people working in the construction industry in 2022, only 513 could be women involved in specific construction related work.

In a bid to counter this shortage, the industry and government bodies have undertaken a number of initiatives to entice students and young people to choose a career construction. Despite these recent attempts, the number of women employed in the industry remain low. In 2018 the CIF launched a year-long awareness campaign to increase the number of women working in the industry. The hashtag #BuildingEquality was used across social media to highlight the issues and increase awareness. The federation also undertook to share the stories of women personnel within the industry, their history, experiences and thoughts on working in the construction. These were again shared across social media and are available on their website (C.I.F 2018).

Women in Construction-Related Degrees

As shown in Table 2 below there were 17.8% more women than men entrants to higher education courses in 2020/21 (O'Shea 2021), so why is the uptake of construction related degrees so low among women? Yes, it has increased in most cases over the past decade, but is this enough? Table 2 details the numbers of women choosing Construction Management and Quantity Surveying Degrees at TU Dublin. These degrees were chosen because the authors teach on these degrees and both have a keen interest in the lack of women enrolling as students.

Table 2 Women students in construction-related degrees at present in TU Dublin.

	2015/2016		2017/2018		2019/2020		2021/2022		2022/2023	
	Total	% Women	Total	% Women	Total	% Women	Total	% Women	Total	% Women
Technological University Dublin										
B.Sc Construction Management	47	2.1% (1 pax)	56	3.6% (2 pax)	51	9.8% (5 pax)	41	12.2% (5 pax)	50	12% (7 pax)
B.Sc Quantity Surveying	41	2.4% (1 pax)	42	7.1% (3 pax)	40	12.5% (5 pax)	57	14% (8 pax)	56	17.9% (10 pax)

Do we need more women in the construction Industry? When asked the question, 80% of 350 construction companies surveyed in the 2018 CIF survey said yes, we do need more. Women bring a number of benefits to a company, including different perspectives, new skill sets and creativity. Increasing the number of women in the industry will also help to alleviate the skills shortage we currently face (CIF 2018).

Materials and Method

There are various methods that can be used when undertaking any form of research. Fellows and Liu (2008) state that research is the systematic investigation into and study of materials, sources, etc. in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions. Another view of the definition of research was provided by The Economic and Social Resource Council (2007) stating that research is any form of disciplined inquiry that aims to contribute to a body of knowledge or theory.

According to Yin (2003) the case study gives the story behind the results by capturing what happened to bring it about, and can be a good opportunity to highlight a project's success, or to draw attention to a particular challenge or difficulty in a project. Case study research excels at bringing us to an understanding of a complex issue or object and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research. Yin defines the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context.

Secondary research also sometimes referred to as desk-research, is a research method that involves using already existing data. This data is summarized and collated to increase its overall effectiveness. One of the key advantages of secondary research is that it allows us to gain deeper insight and draw conclusions from the previous research of others.

A mixed-methods approach was adopted for this research including both a desk top study and case-study analysis. The case study chosen was of registration numbers at Technological University Dublin during the period 2015 – 2023.

Literature Review

There is an abundance of available research demonstrating that the choices of men and women students differ significantly when it comes to deciding their field of study in higher education. Men are more likely to choose subjects such as engineering, maths or science whereas women are more likely to choose subjects such as the humanities, education or the arts.

Stereotyping

There is a long-standing assumption that the construction industry is better suited to men than women. IWISH is a volunteer led community that specialize in providing women secondary school students, and their teachers, with the opportunities associated with STEM. IWISH conducted a survey in 2021 on 2449 women secondary school students and surveyed their attitude towards STEM. Overall, 83% IWISH respondents and 44% of the CIF (2018) respondents felt that there is not enough gender equality or noted gender stereotyping in STEM careers. Finger (2020) discusses gender stereotyping in detail and notes that ongoing gender stereotypes and roles can lead to students making gender- appropriate decisions within school and college.

Society has a pervasive view that science and engineering professions are male-dominated and masculine in nature, thereby causing negative attitudes toward these disciplines among women. This in turn can lead to women feeling isolated within STEM fields. Differences in sexual stereotyping between disciplines may also steer women to enrol in certain fields and avoid others, such as construction. (Knight et al. 2011)

Sewalk and Nietfeld (2013, p. 250) found that the culture surrounding women and media pictures consider construction to be a "dirty, manly, physical, sexist job that women are not welcome".

Poor image of industry

Having conducted surveys with the Associated Schools of Construction colleges in America, Sewalk (2013) found that the image, or perception of the industry was preventing women from choosing this as a career option. Kelly et al (2019) describe references to the chilly climate experienced by women students who find themselves in men dominated environments. These studies show that in these men dominated environments, women may find themselves more liable to gender harassment, have less informal interaction with their peers and are ultimately faced with the overriding stereotype that they are less capable than their men counterparts.

The engineering union Connect declares that the construction industry and other sectors are far behind in supports for women workers: "Whereas other industries are now discussing increased supports for women dealing with menstruation and the menopause, the construction and other sectors which employ trades workers have not even dealt with the issue of adequate toilet facilities," the union's assistant general secretary Brian Nolan stated. (Malone 2022) This is confirmed by the findings of the CIF survey, with 40% of participants stating that the sector is not viewed as attractive to women (CIF 2018). This report continues by discussing the fact that 17% of respondents stated the physical nature of the job as a reason for the shortage of women in the sector (CIF 2018).

Sewalk (2013) notes that women are almost discouraged from entering the industry if they want to have children due to maternity leave after having a child. Women with families find it difficult to deal with extended working hours when they have caretaking responsibilities elsewhere. There is also discussion about how difficult it can be for women to get into the industry as managers are wary of women of a certain age and the potential family needs "Women felt penalised for wanting or having families as their employers saw them as unreliable if they had to take time off for their children" (Sewalk and Nietfeld 2013, p. 243). Another area that may cause women students to discount the industry as an option are the issues surrounding the lack of paid maternity leave should it be required (CIF 2018). In an aim to combat this, the company Laing O'Rourke (2022) announced in July 2022 that employees will be entitled to take six months parental leave at full pay, irrespective of gender. Other Construction companies in the United Kingdom, such as Kier, offer similar policies (Kier 2022).

Lack of Confidence

Of the 2449 women student respondents to the IWISH (2021) survey, 77% noted that they would not be confident in their own ability to do STEM. Bigelow et al. (2015),

Jacob et al. (2020), Kugler et al. (2021) and Shi (2020) all note a lack of academic confidence as a reason given by women students for the low participation of women on STEM and construction courses. Shi (2020 p.130) maintains that "Overcoming the female math confidence deficit alone would bridge the gender gap by 7% among students most academically prepared to enter engineering".

When, or if, women students do decide to choose a men dominated industry to work in, such as construction, they may still lose confidence upon matriculation, which could be due to feelings of isolation when they find themselves underrepresented in certain disciplines (Knight et al. 2011)

Religion

As noted in the introduction, the Irish education system was controlled by the Catholic Church for a long time. This control ultimately led to a large number of single sex schools throughout the country. A by product of this, is that the vast majority of women only schools do not provide a full range of STEM subjects. (Kelly et al. 2018, McNamara 2022). While STEM subjects are not usually essential for undertaking construction related degrees, they can be beneficial and may also boost the student's confidence in the area.

Kelly et al. (2019) also discusses how, even though Irish society has changed in recent decades, religious influence on the role of women in Ireland still influences the subject choice in secondary schools and beyond, as the historical stereotypes remain.

Family/Peer pressure

Peers are notably one of the biggest influences on a women's participation in STEM and associated fields (Kelly et al. 2019) (Shi 2018). Shi (2018) notes that parental occupation can also influence and reinforce gender-based expectations around success in maths and science-based subjects, which can in turn lead men and women students down different paths. This finding is echoed by the results of the 2021 IWISH survey, in which 56% of respondents believed their family had the most influence over their leaving certificate subject choices, while 30% choose their peers. In agreement to these findings, Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) found that career choices of young people are heavily influenced by family members. Paulsen et al. (2001) notes that parental beliefs have the greatest impact whether or not school-leavers plan further education. Interestingly, this was still the case a decade later as Smyth et al. (2011) noted that parents were seen as an important source of advice over school guidance counsellors. Understanding this, it is worrying that the NHBC Foundation in 2016 cautioned that

four out of ten parents would discourage young people from entering a building trade (Waters and McAlpine, 2016).

STEM Subjects

Schools offering STEM

The fact that most women secondary schools do not even offer the choice of some STEM subjects is not a new issue. Decades ago, Breen et al.(1983) stated that while these "technical" subjects are almost universally taught at co-ed and vocational schools, they are absent from girls' secondary schools. According to TIMSS (2015), in the top 60% of higher-earning countries, less than 5% of primary schools are single-sex. Apart from Muslim countries, Ireland has the second-highest instance of single-sex schooling, with only Malta having more single sex schools.

If a school provides STEM subjects, this allows students to become familiar with related professions including the contents, demands, and challenges of such industries. Exposure to STEM subjects in school may allow students, particularly women students, to develop an interest in this area. It is believed that greater exposure to STEM subjects in secondary school may enhance a student's interest in those subjects, which may result in higher enrolment rates in STEM fields in higher education. Understandably, if the student has limited exposure to STEM subjects, this may lead to lower levels of STEM involvement. (Jacob et al. 2020)

This remains the case today. In the counties of Monaghan, Meath and Louth in Ireland there are 53 secondary schools. Of these, 39 are co-ed with five being all men and ten being all women. Of these 10 women only secondary schools, none provide students with the options of woodwork or engineering to junior certificate level. Only one of them offers technical graphics, while three schools offer technology to junior certificate level. The statistics are similar for the leaving certificate cycle, with only one school offering technology, the other nine women only schools offering none of these subjects. (authors own research) While it is not necessary to undertake these subjects to enter 3rd level degrees, they can be beneficial. Table contains a list of all the secondary schools in Co Monaghan, single sex and co-ed. The comparison of STEM subjects being offered can be seen, with the men schools offering the vast majority of subjects, with the women school offering none.

Table 3 Secondary schools in Co Monaghan and the STEM subjects offered

Co Monaghan		Junior Certificate				Leaving Certificate			
School Name:		Technology	Wood Technology	Engineering	Technical Graphics	Technology	Construction Studies	Engineering	Design and Communication Graphics
Largy College	Co-ed		Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y
Coláiste Oiriall	Co-ed		Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y
Ballybay Community College	Co-ed								
Inver College	Co-ed	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Patrician High School	Boys		Y		Y		Y		Y
St Louis Secondary School	Girls								
Our Lady's Secondary School	Co-ed	Y			Y		Y		Y
Monaghan Collegiate School	Co-ed		Y	Y	Y		Y		Y
Castleblayney College	Co-ed		Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y
St. Macartan's College	Boys	Y	Y		Y		Y		Y
St. Louis Secondary School	Girls	Y							
Beech Hill College	Co-ed		Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y

This corresponds with the findings of the 2021 IWISH survey, which found that 55% of respondents were interested in studying Engineering, 52% interested in Construction Studies and 46% were interested in Design and Communications at Leaving Certificate level. However they did not have access to these subjects.

Women choosing STEM

Setting aside the barrier that some schools do not offer a full array of STEM subjects, even when they are offered, women students tend not to choose them. (Ertl et al. 2017). Preconceived assumptions about STEM subjects in terms of their gender bias have been instilled in women students before they make their leaving certificate choices.

The numbers of women undertaking these STEM subjects at secondary school level may have an impact on their 3rd level choice (IWISH 2021). In 2021 a study was undertaken on the breakdown of men and women taking higher level STEM subjects at leaving certificate level (O'Shea 2021):

Table 4 Student numbers undertaking STEM subjects 2021

Subject – 2021	% Men	% Women
Engineering	92	8
Construction Studies	89	11
Design and Communication Graphics	84	16
Maths	50	50

While the percentage of women undertaking these subjects in 2021 may appear low, compared to the findings in 1983 (Breen et al. 1983) noted below in table 5, the ratio has increased dramatically.

Table 5 Student numbers undertaking STEM subjects 1983

Subject – 1983	% Women
Engineering W'shop	0
Building Construction	0
Technical Drawing	0
Maths	4

If women students were able to study these subjects, it may spark an interest, leading them towards a construction related degree. CIF (2018) agrees that there is a need to engage with women students in secondary school and encourage them to undertake STEM subjects.

Lack of role models

As previously noted, women in the construction industry may feel a sense of isolation due to the lack of women company or women colleagues. It has been found that most women will progress their career within the industry through the involvement of a mentor (Sewalk 2013). Bigelow (2015) notes that higher education institutions have had to make efforts to address negative stereotypes through undergraduate mentoring programmes intended for women, something which TU Dublin offers to its engineering students.

This corresponds with the IWISH (2021) survey, in which 84% of respondents noted a lack of women role models as a barrier to choosing a career in STEM and as exacerbating the gender stereotyping within the industries. Correspondingly, (Kelly et al. 2019) conducted a survey of second year undergraduate STEM students and found that 48% of participants believe that a lack of role models accounted for a lower number of women in STEM fields. Women lecturers may provide a way to increase women student enrolments, as they may serve as role models for young women and influence students perceptions of who a construction professional is. Recruitment efforts in general are more effective if students can relate to someone like themselves, i.e. a women student with a women lecturer (Bigelow et al. 2015).

Lack of career knowledge/Career Guidance/Teachers

Finger (2020) notes that it is accepted that scholars make educational decisions under uncertainty and incorrect information, and that decision making may be biased. Similarly, Bigelow et al. (2015) note that advisors have limited knowledge about construction degree programmes especially when it comes to the differences between construction labour and management opportunities.

High-school counsellors do not promote construction management and may not even be aware of the opportunities (Sewalk and Nietfeld 2013). This is worrying as McCoy, Smyth et al. (2014) reported that a number of respondents in a survey of school leavers, showed that school guidance councillors (83%) are the main source of advice, followed by mothers (73%) and fathers (61%). Overall, there is a lack of knowledge about the career opportunities and progression routes amongst these key influencers. In 2013, the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB), stated that the construction industry as a career choice scored 6.2 out of 10 among parents and 5.6 out of 10 among career advisors. Likewise, such roles within the industry were seen as dirty and not suitable for school-leavers who could get into higher education (Waters and McAlpine 2016). Similar findings were found in another survey in the UK, with the CITB stating that such claims were highlighted in a comprehensive survey completed by Pye Tait Consulting. The purpose of this survey was to investigate the views careers advisors and teachers had on the construction industry. Unsurprisingly, 35% of career advisors believe a career in construction to be unattractive (CITB 2014). In 2012, the Association of Colleges, established that 82% of teachers lacked knowledge to advise school-leavers about career opportunities in the construction industry while 44% admitted to giving ill-informed advice (CITB 2014). On the other hand, the Educating the Educators Report (2012), argued that teachers and careers advisors are mindful of the gap in knowledge and seek assistance to fill it (Waters and McAlpine, 2016). It should not come as a surprise then that 82% of respondents to the IWISH (2021) survey said they need more information about STEM college courses and careers.

What is being done to attract women students?

Sewalk (2013) argued that we need to change the culture of the industry so that men accept women as their equals. We can only expect women students to aspire to careers in an industry they know about and understand. Creating more awareness around the industry is one possible way to increase women numbers. Considering the above barriers, what can be done to entice women students onto construction related degrees?

Career guidance/parents

CIF (2018) noted that "Engaging primary school teachers, career guidance teachers and second level students in a dynamic and interesting way is acknowledged to be a significant challenge for the sector." The CITB (2014) report calls for, mandatory teacher training in construction and vocational roles for career advisors and teachers, which would increase the awareness of opportunities for all students, and by default the awareness of women students.

Women role models

Launched in 2017, the CIF #Building Equality campaign aims to increase the visibility of women in the construction industry (CIF 2023). In 2020, CIF launched a billboard campaign "We are Construction" to entice more women into the sector. CIF seeks to challenge men dominated stereotypes across all levels including directorship roles. The CIF website offers over 60 profiles of women role models who currently work in the construction industry, in roles varying from apprentice, to Quantity Surveyor, Building Surveyor, Health and Safety Manager, up to Site Foreman and Director (C.I.F 2018). Construction companies have followed this example, with Ardmac, Mercury and others providing profiles of some of the women staff on their website (ARDMAC 2023) (Mercury 2023).

IWISH presents a range of offerings with the aim of providing more information to young women about STEM opportunities and ultimately of increasing the number of women in STEM. They organise for 3rd level women STEM students and women STEM professionals to visit primary schools, discuss STEM opportunities and raise awareness (IWISH 2021).

End single-sex schools and improve STEM subjects

The Irish government is taking proactive steps to remove single sex schools from our education system. The Department of Education has not sanctioned a new single sex school since 1998. In February 2022, the Irish Labour Party tabled a bill to end single-sex schools in the Republic of Ireland. The hope is that this will come to fruition for primary schools within 10 years and secondary schools within 15 years. (McNamara 2022). The removal of single sex schools will in turn increase the chances of women students being offered STEM subjects as a choice for both the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate.

Findings/Analysis

After our in-depth desk top study, it is evident that there are a number of possible reasons why women students do not regard the Construction Industry, and in turn a Construction related degree as a career route. Table 6 below, details the most common reasons and supporting references.

Table 6 Possible reasons why women students do not choose construction related degrees

Possible reasons for women students not choosing construction industry	Reference
Stereotyping	(Finger et al. 2020) (Bigelow et al. 2015) (IWISH 2021) (CIF 2018) (Knight et al. 2011) (Sewalk and Nietfeld 2013)
Poor image of industry & lack of work/life balance	(Finger et al. 2020) (Bigelow et al. 2015) (Kelly et al. 2019) (CIF 2018) (Malone 2022) (Sewalk and Nietfeld 2013)
Lack of confidence	(Bigelow et al. 2015) (IWISH 2021) (Shi 2018) (Jacob et al. 2020) (Kugler, Tinsley et al. 2021) (Knight et al. 2011)
Religion	(Kelly et al. 2019), (McNamara 2022)
Family	(Kelly et al. 2019), (Shi 2018), (IWISH 2021) (Smyth et al. 2011)
STEM subjects	(Jacob et al. 2020) (IWISH 2021) (Bigelow et al. 2015) (Breen et al. 1983) (Ertl et al. 2017) (Knight et al. 2011)
Lack of role models/mentoring	(Bigelow et al. 2015) (Sewalk and Nietfeld 2013) (IWISH, 2021) (Kelly et al. 2019)
Lack of information from careers advisors	(Bigelow et al. 2015) (Sewalk and Nietfeld 2013) (McCoy et al. 2014) (Waters and McAlpine, 2014) (CITB 2014)

One of the key findings is that a lack of awareness and understanding on that part of parents, teachers and career advisors is one of the main reasons for students not choosing construction related degrees. In order to raise more awareness of the opportunities that women students would have in the industry, training for counsellors, teachers and parents should be readily available. All school-leavers, irrespective of gender, should receive adequate information about the construction industry and the job opportunities within it. For example, there could be a specific government or sectoral agency that coordinates school visits, as well as talks and open days in secondary schools to inform school-leavers about the industry and college courses available.

Conclusion

Women students in Ireland face country-specific factors that they may face if they seek to pursue a construction related degree, which are somewhat unique. The education system in Ireland was controlled by the Catholic Church for decades, and this resulted in a high percentage of single sex schools throughout the country, with women only schools often not offering Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) subjects. While STEM subjects are not usually essential for undertaking construction related degrees, they can be beneficial and may also boost students confidence in the area.

The key findings reveal that there are a number of reasons why women students do not pursue a career in this industry. These include the work/life balance that the career will provide, the poor image the construction industry has as a possible place of work, a lack of specific careers guidance on this industry, students' lack of confidence and parental influences.

While the results suggest that there are several key reasons why women secondary school students do not choose construction related degrees, recommendations for potential ways to reduce the impact of such obstacles include highlighting women role models within the industry, increasing knowledge of the industry among teachers and careers guidance counsellors, and increasing the provision of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects in schools.

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Section 2: Abstract

Forum Medicum (by Agata Garpenlind)

Bodies without Sexualities: An Intersectional Approach to Representations of Asexual and Romantic Spectrum in Anglophone Cinemas

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Abstract

The vast majority of annual reports published by GLAAD[1] and AVEN[2] on media representations of the asexual spectrum shows that asexuality is being limited to character' attitudes towards sexual activity. These individuals are represented as ace-coded[3] or explicitly asexual, not because they do not experience sexual attraction, but rather because they are not perceived as sexually attractive. Thus, bodies marked as asexual are always portrayed as gendered and exposed as being interlinked with race, body shaming and disability.

While there is the Vito Russo Test for LGBTQIA2S+ Media Representation, offered by GLAAD founder and film historian Vito Russo, there is no test filter specifically designed for the asexual and romantic spectrum in the film and television industry. As part of this research, the filter test, entitled 'Ace Cake'[4] has been designed to identify representations of the asexual and romantic spectrum in the television and film industry. It will include seven criteria. The first criterion will be whether a narrative film includes an explicitly identifiable asexual character, identifiable or ace-coded. The second will ask: in which film genres is this asexual character being included? The third will be whether this asexual character is a main or secondary character. The fourth will seek to reveal whether this asexual character is solely defined by her/his/their sexual orientation in the filmic universe or not. The fifth will reveal whether this asexual character is defined by his/her/their gender identity by other characters or not. The sixth will be whether this asexual character is portrayed as single, acting in a romantic relationship, or married. The final criterion will be whether this asexual character is

defined by her/his/their ethnic background. The research material will consist of 35 Anglophone narrative films, from the 1930s to the present day that include at least one asexual character, whether confirmed or ace-coded. Those narrative films that meet all seven criteria in the Ace Cake Test will be entitled to be known as 'Ace-affirming'. Those narrative films that fail to meet at least one of the criteria of the Ace Cake Test will be termed 'Ace-phobic'. Three of the selected narrative films will also be interpreted in terms of the split attraction model, allonormativity, amatonormativity and singlism.

Keywords: the split attraction model, asexuality, allonormativity, amatonormativity, singlism.

References

GLAAD is the official acronym for the US-based non-governmental organisation "Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation", founded in 1985 by Vito Russo, Jewelle Gomez, and Lauren Hinds.

AVEN is the official acronym for the Asexuality Visibility and Education Network, founded by David Jay in 2001.

Ace coding is a script-writing strategy that makes room for asexual characters without explicitly acknowledging them as such in the story.

The term 'Ace Cake' is being used as an unofficial symbol of the asexual spectrum, along with the spade, which derived from the maxim 'cake is better than sex'.

Rights of Nature and Ecofeminism: Towards a More Equal Society

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Abstract

In my PhD thesis, entitled 'Rights of nature: Cultural models and legal traditions in comparison', I try to understand whether the new legal model of recognising the rights of nature could help to overturn the anthropocentric structure of modern Western law.

The most common thesis allied to the rights of nature is that the causes of environmental exploitation are mainly cultural (Bourdon, 2011; Boyd, 2017). As a consequence, it is argued, the recognition of natural entities as legal and moral subjects could help to overcome the domination of humans over nature, which has been legitimised by the dichotomous and anthropocentric visions incorporated into modern Western law deriving from Cartesian rationalism and Judeo-Christian religion.

Many ecofeminist authors draw upon similar premises, affirming that the ideological hierarchies legitimised by patriarchal society contribute to the domination perpetrated by white men over every subject considered 'inferior': not only nature, but also non-human animals, women and all the other subjects which for centuries have been considered 'inanimate property' or 'goods' at their disposal (Plumwood, 1992; Shiva, 1989).

Through an analysis of the ethical, sociological, philosophical and juridical theories that underlie the paradigm of the rights of nature, and a comparison with some of the main eco-feminist theses, I will evaluate the compatibility of the model of the rights of nature with the objectives of ecofeminism, in order to understand if the paradigm of the rights of nature could lead our legal systems to re-evaluate, celebrate and defend nature and everything that modern Western society has devalued.

Keywords: Rights of Nature; ecofeminism; Western legal tradition; anthropocentrism; andro-centric legal systems

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A Non-Anthropocentric and Non-Heteronormative Reading of Female Sexuality and Desire in Julia Ducournau's *Raw*

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Abstract

French filmmaker Julia Ducournau's vegetarian horror film *Raw* (2016) tells the coming-of- age story of a young woman, Justine, who discovers her identity and cannibalistic sexual desires while studying at a veterinary college. Justine, raised by her parents as a vegetarian from birth, is forced by senior students to take part in violent hazing rituals during which she and her first-year classmates are physically humiliated and forced to eat raw rabbit kidney, their bodies literally awash in animal blood. After eating animal meat, she starts to develop an insatiable craving for both human and animal flesh. Based on a close reading of the cinematic text of Ducournau's *Raw*, this paper explores the relationship between acts of animal meat consumption and the patriarchal domination and suppression of non-heteronormative female sexuality in carnivorous societies. Drawing on a feminist reappropriation of Bakhtin's theory of the (grotesque) body and a non-anthropocentric reading of Kristeva's notion of abjection, it traces the psychological and physical changes in the lead female character, with a specific focus on how she perceives and connects with her body and sexuality. This paper suggests that the representation of the vegetarian in the film as a 'cannibalistic carnivore' blurs the boundaries between human and nonhuman and fills her, the spectator and even her sister – who has similar cannibalistic tendencies – with loathing and disgust because it signals the return of the abject, the bestial within the human, that was cast away. Ducournau's narrative, I argue, turns to the protagonist's body as a site of non-heterosexual, non-reproductive and non-anthropocentric female sexuality to show that the human subject is not always created through the 'carnivorous sacrifice' of the nonhuman. It also subverts 'the heterosexual matrix', in Butler's terms, through

Ducournau's portrayal of cannibalism as a means of sexual pleasure derived from the consumption of another human being's flesh. This paper explores the potential of the film as a medium for engaging with generative possibilities of abjection that enable the positive reconstitution of the sexual and gendered marginality of the female body by transforming it into a site of sexual self-discovery.

Gender Misconceptions in Physics: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

The issue of lack of diversity in science, technology, engineering and mathematics – STEM – areas has been a concern for many years. Physics is one of those areas, with the profile of the majority of physicists and physics students across most Western nations remaining male, White, middle-class, without physical disabilities, cisgender and heterosexual. Hence, physicists and physics educators worldwide have been increasingly investigating the reasons that keep women, non-White and LGBTQ+ people away from physics. They are also developing strategies that could encourage underrepresented students to develop an interest in learning the discipline and promote the retention of underrepresented physicists in their scientific careers. Among initiatives that specifically aim to address gender inequalities, there is an emphasis on (the lack of) women in physics, which may render other social categories such as race/ethnicity, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds invisible (Vidor, 2020). In addition, conceptualisations of gender usually remain *implicit* in discussions about gender inequalities in physics, which may contribute to perpetuating gender bias and sexist behaviour within the physics community. Based on the above considerations, the investigation presented in this paper aimed to make conceptualisations of gender *explicit*, as well as revealing the gender norms shaping social dynamics within the Institute of Physics located in a major research-intensive, public university in South America. To achieve this aim, I drew upon the findings of an empirical qualitative study which consisted of interviews with six professors and 18 students enrolled in a postgraduate programme offered by the Institute of Physics. Interviews lasted 50–180 minutes each, and were conducted remotely via an online communication platform. They were video and audio recorded. Audio recordings were then transcribed, and the

transcripts were analysed following a poststructural framework for interview analysis (Bacchi and Bonham, 2016). Additionally, the analysis was supported by contemporary scholarship on gender as developed in the fields of biomedical research and feminist political philosophy, particularly drawing on Judith Butler's concept of *gender performativity* (Butler, 1990). The findings indicate that, although interviewees are aware of the multiple ways in which gender inequalities may affect social dynamics in physics, there is still a widespread belief in stereotyped conceptualisations of gender based on a binary and essentialist model. As a consequence, interviewees showed a tendency to dichotomise the debate on gender inequalities in physics between two conflicting perspectives: on the one hand, considering gender as something 'biological' and 'natural'; and on the other, considering it as 'social' and 'constructed'. Such a binary view was articulated as a way to support misconceptions about gender dimensions (i.e. sex, gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation), justify the reproduction of exclusionary gender norms, and ignore gender violence within the Institute of Physics. In sum, the analysis indicates a general lack of knowledge about gender performativity or how gender performances shape power relations among diverse people. These findings are relevant to the promotion of gender equality in physics because they suggest the need for open, honest and up-to-date conversations about gender itself within the physics community.

Keywords: gender performativity, interview study, social dynamics in physics.

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Discrimination against Transgender Individuals during the Hiring Process: An Experimental Investigation

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Abstract

Transgender people are subjected to employment discrimination, which can lead to difficulties finding work, losing jobs, not being promoted and many other problems. This study aims to investigate discrimination against transgender individuals during the hiring process. To examine this discrimination, a fictitious scenario and four different CVs based on gender identity (transgender/cisgender) and gender (male/female) were created and given to participants (N=324) with a hiring intention scale. Gender and gender identity variables were manipulated by focusing on the CVs' features. Firstly, CVs were created and to make difference, Transgender Solidarity Community was indicated for transgender CVs as different than cis-gender CVs. CV photographs were taken from https://thispersondoesnotexist.com/. CV photographs representing transgender and cisgender individuals were taken from the website https://thispersondoesnotexist.com/. These photographs were standardised using a pilot survey and were chosen by taking the opinions of participants. The selected images were then placed in the CVs. The hypotheses based on interactions between cisgender and transgender were tested using 2X2 ANOVA analysis.

The findings revealed significant differences were found between those who evaluated trans-female and cis-female job candidates, as well as between those who evaluated trans-female and trans-male candidates. However, no significant difference was found between those who evaluated cis-male and trans-male candidates, nor between those who evaluated cis-male and cis-female candidates.

Our findings could indicate that trans individuals are exposed to discrimination in business life. They could also be helpful in determining practices, training, rules that

can be implemented and precautions that can be taken in business life to reduce such discrimination. Our study could provide a foundation for future studies on discrimination against transgender individuals during the hiring process.

Birth Justice and Violence during Childbirth

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Abstract

Obstetric violence and violence during childbirth is a phenomenon that has been documented in many countries around the globe. It describes the violence that women and other birthers experience while giving birth in medically assisted hospital births. This form of violence can be understood as gendered and sexualised and divided into institutional, structural, individual, epistemic and technological violence. It can range from physical abuse to racist or verbal abuse, failure to obtain informed consent, non-consensual vaginal examinations, failure to provide privacy, neglect and many more. This form of violence requires our attention and a feminist analysis within different fields of research. Looking at this problem from a reproductive justice and birth justice framework can enable us to take action through our research. This presentation will summarise my approach from a feminist medical Science and Technology Studies perspective. This PhD project is an ethnography of violence during childbirth in Austrian hospitals. It will give an overview of the problems that exist, the concept of birth justice and the different forms of violence that emerge during labour. It will summarise how, using a material-semiotic approach, this network of violence can be made visible. The goal of this research project is to portray and map out all the interactions and entities that are violent, make violence possible or are experienced as violence.

Keywords: obstetric violence, birth justice, feminist medical ethnography

Creating Feminist Solidarity Networks in On/Offline Spaces for the Struggle against Sexual Harassment: Turkey's #MeToo Movement

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Abstract

Digital activism has been on the rise, particularly after the introduction of Web 2.0 technologies, and feminists have creatively utilised this new technology in their struggle against systemic inequalities and violence. Immense visibility, mass-scale awareness-raising and transnational solidarity networks have become the new tools of feminist activism. The curation of the #MeToo hashtag, along with the feminist organising around it, has been a critical moment in the struggle against sexual harassment. Its arrival in Turkey has heated up feministdiscussions around the politics of disclosure of sexual harassment as a feminist methodology and altered the ways of doing feminist activism. My research aims to explore how feminist practices and politics are changing in this digital moment of the #MeToo movement in Turkey in the field of cultural production. It aims to understand the interplay of online and offline feminist activist practices organised around sexual harassment and its implications for feminist politics, with a particular focus on two feminist solidarity networks, Susma Bitsin Platformu and Görsel Sanatlarda Kadın Grubu. Based on in-depth interviews with the members of these platforms and close observation of online communities organised around the #MeToo moment in Turkey, I analyse the continuum of on/offline feminist strategies and solidarities emerging out of the struggle against sexual harassment in the field of cinema/TVand theatre, and discuss whether the on/offline resistance developed by feminist solidarity networks can constitute tools for uprooting a system of sexual violence. Additionally, I examine whether this form of activism creates space for an intersectional analysis and contains the potential for enforcing the sustainable

transformation of oppressive systems for all women, and for everyone else, through the alliances it builds.

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I am a PhD Candidate on the Gender Studies Programme at Sabancı University. I received my MA from Sabancı University Cultural Studies Programme and BA from Boğaziçi University English Language and Literature Department. I am a feminist researcher whose interests focus on gender-based violence and women's empowerment, digital feminist activism, online and offline feminist solidarity networks, the #MeToo movement, and the resistance as well as struggles of women+ against sexual violence.

Preliminary Title: Resisting Bodies in Digital Space: Exploring Queer Politics of Hope in Turkey

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic and increasing right-wing populist hegemony in politics have been threatening public assemblies for LGBTI+ rights activists at a transnational scale. Turkey is one of these places where heteropatriarchal policies and neoliberal limitations on the acts of citizenship are having a particular impact on the LGBTI+ community, such as the right to political participation and embodied public demonstrations. In addition, digital media platforms, with their specific affordances, provide novel spaces for the LGBTI+ community and activism, although these platforms are not free from cyberbullying or surveillance regimes. Whereas offline activism has become increasingly challenging due to pandemic temporalities, queer knowledge production through podcasts, YouTube channels or (micro-)blogging has become a source of important networks of solidarity. Inspired by such novel forms of activism taking place in digital spaces, I turn towards the everyday activism that creates queer memory work and culture(s). Drawing on a multi-sited and digital ethnography in Istanbul, Turkey, my study explores queer knowledge production as an important part of the LGBTI+ rights struggle along the continuum of small- and large-scale resistance against heteropatriarchal oppression. In doing so, I look at the role of the digital in building anticipatory resistance for the LGBTI+ community across time and space. The concept of anticipatory resistance is rooted in an anticipatory temporality, as developed by Jasbir Puar (2007), which thinks of the future in open-ended terms, and imagines queer futures. To oppose heteropatriarchal oppression, therefore, is to engage in the production and continuation of emotions such as hope, joy and happiness. I explore how everyday activism in digital spaces produces affective resonances for the queer politics of hope, and the limits to it.

Keywords: queer knowledge production, digital spaces, LGBTI+ activism, anticipatory resistance, queer politics of hope

A Controversial Feminist Term: Obstetric Violence

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Abstract

Obstetric violence is a legal term originating in Latin America, a response that emerged in the 2000s due to the influence of activist movements aiming to humanise childbirth. The term refers to the direct (physical, verbal), emotional (disrespect, dehumanisation) and structural (discrimination) violence that occurs in both public and private health institutions during pregnancy, childbirth and postnatal stays. Obstetric violence refers to an act or omission by healthcare professionals that creates physical or psychological harm to those giving birth. It is a controversial term because many healthcare workers, scholars and NGOs perceive it as a provocative and misleading concept that is used to blame individual healthcare professionals. However, for some feminist scholars, obstetric violence can be considered a tool to make visible the structural and systematic problems informed by patriarchal, racist and classist power relations. Some scholars argue that it is essential to differentiate obstetric violence from other forms of medical violence due to its gender-based implications. As obstetric violence is directly related to the issue of giving informed consent for healthcare procedures, the debates around the term should also beanalysed in relation to theoretical discussions on birthing people's agency, vulnerability and empowerment. In this paper, I aim to conduct a conceptual debate by focusing on obstetric violence. I will focus on the controversies regarding the concept and arguments that acknowledge obstetric violence as a form of gender-based violence. In addition, I will focus on the relationship between obstetric violence and feminist debates on agency, vulnerability and control. In order to conduct a theoretical discussion by positioning the term obstetric violence at the centre of this conceptual research, I will review the literature by specifically focusing on studies that elaborate on obstetric violence as a form of gender-based violence.

Keywords: obstetric violence, childbirth, gender-based violence, agency, healthcare professionals

Affective (homo)normativity in queer asylum law

Sophia Zisakou

Abstract

This article aims to analyse and critique the European legal framework for credibility assessment in queer asylum claims through the lens of postcolonial feminist and queer theory. It also discusses alternative affective conceptualisations of queerness. As the analysis of the relevant guidelines demonstrates, the focus of the process is on applicants' emotions. They are required to comply with a rather binary affective schema in order to be deemed 'credibly queer': On the one hand, they are expected to have suffered enough in their queerphobic countries of origin while, on the other, they are supposed to find safety in asylum countries, following a linear affective trajectory from oppression to liberation. By bringing together discourses on affective and sexual citizenship, this article seeks to analyse how access to asylum and rights is mediated through affective management and control. It highlights the biopolitical, productive character of the affective rules that govern intelligibility during the asylum process. Moreover, it discusses how reimagining queerness as affect, beyond the official guidelines, through those 'failed' queer performances that have been rendered non-credible, could call into question epistemically and epistemologically violent, normative definitions of 'genuine' queerness and open up the norms of recognisability towards new possibilities and potentialities.

Keywords: Credibility assessment, queer asylum claims, affect theory, affective citizenship, sexual citizenship

Affective Student Experiences of Cisnormativity and Heteronormativity in Teacher Education

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Abstract

This study is positioned within feminist and educational research fields, more particularly within intersectional (Hill Collins, 2019) and corpomaterial (Lykke, 2010) perspectives on teacher education. Intersectionality enables us to understand how power structures built on exclusionary norms related to aspects such as class, racialisation, gender, ability and age impact upon education. Corpomaterial theories focus on bodies and materiality, emphasising aspects that have traditionally been overlooked in a critical analysis, while at the same time foregrounding an affirmative perspective. The analysis is based on individual and group interviews with 12 student teachers, who either self-identified as breaching norms related to an intersectional power dynamic or showed interest in discussing such norms within their educations. The analysis was followed through using a theoretical thematic approach (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 175), where the concept of affect (Zembylas, 2021, p. 6) guided the analysis.

In this paper, I zoom in on particular aspects of the student teachers' narratives where LGBTQ+ perspectives on teacher education are addressed. The narratives concern both student teachers' experiences of inclusive and exclusionary practices within their programmes, and also their perceptions of how heteronormativity and cisnormativity are active in the content of their educations. The findings show that student teachers are affected by teacher educators' lack of knowledge about LGBTQ+ perspectives; for example, during preparation before school placement. Another example shows that cisnormativity saturates the everyday language of teacher educators.

This study contributes to Swedish educational research on how societal power structures shape teacher education (see Bayati, 2014), and previous research on how feminist new-

materialist perspectives can enrich the analysis of teaching/learning in teacher education (Lanas and Huuki, 2017).

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