



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**MELBOURNE**

Melbourne Social  
Equity Institute

# Gender Equity Symposium 2022

**An Event for Graduate and Early Career  
Researchers at the University of Melbourne**

**Friday 2 December 2022**

## **Acknowledgment of Country**

The Melbourne Social Equity Institute acknowledges the unique place held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original custodians of the lands and waterways across the Australian continent with histories of continuous connection dating back more than 60,000 years.

We acknowledge and pay respect to the Traditional Owners of the lands upon which the University of Melbourne's campuses are situated:

- the Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung peoples (Parkville, Southbank, Werribee, and Burnley campuses)
- the Yorta Yorta Nation (Shepparton and Dookie campuses)
- the Dja Dja Wurrung people (Creswick campus).

We also acknowledge and are grateful to the Traditional Owners and Elders who have been instrumental in our reconciliation journey.

We also acknowledge and pay our respect to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff, Elders and collaborators, and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who visit our campuses from across Australia.

# Letter from the Symposium Convenors

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The Melbourne Social Equity Institute responds to many important social issues through its interdisciplinary research, training, and partnerships. Reflecting current social equity challenges and complementary research across the University of Melbourne, in 2022 gender equity continues to be one of the Institutes research priorities.

Evidence shows improved gender equity reduces violence, fosters economic prosperity and institutional integrity, and advances social and economic innovation. The unequal status of women and girls has long been recognised as both a central cause and consequence of social inequity, with more recent movements highlighting the negative effects of gender norms on transgender and non-binary people. Similarly, gender inequality and the social norms and structural practices underpinning it are increasingly recognised as factors impacting men's and boys' wellbeing. This research priority engages with gender inequities at all levels of societal systems and with effective approaches to reduce these inequities.

The Gender Symposium 2022 will welcome graduate researchers and early career academics to share their research. This year, the event brings together researchers from six faculties, encompassing 12 schools, highlighting the ways diverse disciplines are working to make visible and address multiple gender inequities and settings of discrimination. The Gender Symposium presents opportunities to engage in critical dialogue, provide and receive feedback, and build interdisciplinary networks.

The Symposium is structured to allow researchers to share their projects at various stages of development. For some, you will hear about the beginning exploration of their literature review and how they are uncovering the gaps in the research topic, others will share the theoretical and methodological approaches that will support how they will frame their research design and analyse their data, some will share emerging findings. Across the day, we hope that presenters and participants find an inclusive and constructive space to test and debate ideas and share questions with others who are researching and advocating for a more equitable society.

**Professor Kylie Smith and Dr Victor Sojo Monzon**  
**Gender Equity Research Priority Area Leads**  
**Melbourne Social Equity Institute**

# Program

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**9.30 WELCOME – Professor Kylie Smith and Dr Victor Sojo Monzon**

**SESSION 1 QUEER INCLUSIVE PRACTICE AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

9.40 NICHOLAS HILL

Intersectionality as praxis: co-creating inclusive and safe research procedures

10.00 ALESSANDRA CHINSEN

‘There’s hope and there’s a future for all of us’: Preliminary findings from the co-design of a group therapy program for young trans people

10.20 CAMELIA WALKER

Statistical reasons to include transgender and gender diverse sex variables in health research

**SESSION 2 HEALTH SYSTEMS AND WOMEN’S OUTCOMES**

10.40 LUCY MODRA

The minority effect: sex differences in mortality of ICU patients

11.00 CITRA INDAH LESTARI

Women, risk information and digital literacy during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia

**11.10 MORNING TEA**

**SESSION 3 SAFE SPACES FOR WOMEN**

11.35 ERIKA MARTINO

A matter of life and death: fostering a safe crisis accommodation landscape

11.55 SHIVA NOURI

An ethnographic approach to exploring the role of social media in women’s experience of urban public space

**SESSION 4 GENDERED UNPAID LABOUR**

12.15 ANNA SCOVILLE

Division of paid and unpaid work in Australian families: associations with sleep outcomes in men and women

- 12.35 LAUREN RYAN  
Fathering, feminism and the future of work: remote-first work and the gendered division of paid and unpaid labour
- 12.55 DOMINICA MEADE  
Gender dynamics in community volunteering practices
- 1.05 **Professor Jo Barraket, Melbourne Social Equity Institute**
- 1.15 **LUNCH**
- SESSION 5 REPRODUCTIVE INEQUITIES**
- 2.00 LINDSIE ARTHUR  
Hormonal contraceptives as behavioural disruptors: theory and implications
- 2.20 MAHARTI TRIHARTA  
Investigation of sustainable career for female engineers – mitigating impacts of biological reproductive inequities between sexes
- SESSION 6 IDENTITIES, IDEOLOGIES, PRIDE AND PREJUDICE**
- 2.30 IAN RAFAEL RAMIREZ  
The kanal and urban queer worldmaking in metropolitan Manila
- 2.50 JO CHURCH  
The emergence of anti-gender movements within the context of Australia: discourses, practices and ethical considerations
- SESSION 7 GENDER, POLICY AND POLITICS**
- 3.10 ANNIE DOUGLAS  
What is young women's empowerment? Understanding the messiness and contestation (Video Trailer)
- 3.12 KATRINA LAWRENCE-HONEYCOMBE  
Global policies and impediments to gender equality in education
- 3.32 RASHID HAIDERI  
For self, community, and the environment: the rural women's activism of Nagar Valley, Pakistan
- 3.42 YOLANDA ACKER  
Women and music on stage during the Spanish civil war
- 3.52 **CLOSING REMARKS**
- 4.00 **END**

# Intersectionality as praxis: co-creating inclusive and safe research procedures

**NICHOLAS HILL (HE/HIM)**

Effective social policy responses to the needs of LGBTIQ+ communities demand evidence for the development of appropriate services and allocation of funding. Accompanying these calls are important ethical questions including: Who is an expert? And, what constitutes evidence? LGBTIQ+ communities are calling for a greater say in research and policy. The social sciences are attempting to respond to these calls through a significant paradigm shift and the establishment of meaningful partnerships with communities. Decentering academic expertise asks us to reflect on the limits of theories and methodologies used to produce knowledge and examine how participants are located within research. Moreover, they generate questions about who is representative of a given community and what constitutes inclusive research practice. Developing tools with which to think across difference and what might constitute safety for different LGBTIQ+ groups is central to this social justice project. This paper provides an overview of attempts to develop an intersectional research praxis within my research. It focuses on how I try to work in partnership with LGBTIQ+ communities and reflects on how my positionality as a white queer cis male researcher shapes participant experiences and engagement.

**Dr Nicholas Hill** (He/Him) is a McKenzie Fellow in the School of Social and Political Sciences, Faculty of Arts. He specialises in LGBTIQ+ mental health research conducted in partnership with community organisations and representatives. Nicholas is currently working on Improving LGBTIQ+ Mental Health: Co-creating Inclusive Health and Social Care project.

# ‘There’s hope and there’s a future for all of us’: Preliminary findings from the co-design of a group therapy program for young trans people

ALESSANDRA CHINSEN (SHE/HER)

Trans young people are at a greater risk of anxiety and depression than cis young people, which is associated with their experiences of rejection and discrimination due to transphobia. While there is a significant need for psychosocial interventions targeted to this group, there is a lack of programs developed with and for them (Busa et al., 2018). We used co-design, a participatory method where consumers are involved in service design, to collaborate with young trans people to develop a group therapy program to be piloted at the Royal Children’s Hospital Gender Service (RCHGS). We recruited eight young trans people from the RCHGS. They participated in three online workshops where they designed the program, and an online survey where they assessed their experience of the workshops. Here we present preliminary results from the workshops and survey, and observations from the co-design. In the workshops, participants designed a six-session program facilitated by a psychologist and trans peer worker, and in the survey, they reported that the workshops were enjoyable and worthwhile. More broadly, we found that co-design was an effective method for collaborating with young trans people, though some adaptations to activities were needed to facilitate engagement with neurodivergent participants.

**Alessandra Chinsen** (she/her) is a first year PhD student with the University of Melbourne, Murdoch Children’s Research Institute and Royal Children’s Hospital. Her PhD is centred around designing and trialling a group therapy program for young trans people, with a focus on the use of participatory research methods.

# Statistical reasons to include transgender and gender diverse sex variables in health research

CAMELIA WALKER (THEY/THEM)

Transgender and gender diverse (TGD) relevant sex and gender data are not routinely collected in medical and scientific studies, despite it widely being accepted that these data can be of social benefit. Intersex and TGD people may have a combination of sex characteristics that are different to those of cisgender people and therefore ignoring these data causes issues when biological sex is considered an explanatory variable. This talk explores how not collecting these data and misclassifying TGD people by sex biases results, reduces statistical power and leads to larger sample size requirements for the same power. It also shows how high rates of morbidities in the TGD population lead to a high proportion of TGD people in some study cohorts.

**Dr Camelia Walker** is a Research Fellow in the School of Mathematics and Statistics at the University of Melbourne. They are one of the modellers that informed the Australian COVID-19 public health response. Their work utilises stochastic modelling and computational statistical methods to characterise infectious diseases. Camelia is interested in malaria infection dynamics, pandemic preparedness and policy-relevant infectious disease modelling.

# The minority effect: sex differences in mortality of ICU patients

LUCY MODRA (SHE/HER)

Women have worse outcomes than men in several conditions more common in men, including including cardiovascular disease. We hypothesised a relationship between sex balance within each diagnostic group of intensive care unit (ICU) patients; defined as the percentage of patients who were women; and hospital mortality of women compared to men with that same diagnosis. Methods: We studied 1,450,782 ICU patients (42.1% women) in the Australia and New Zealand Intensive Care Society's Adult Patient Database (2011-2020). We compared sex balance with the adjusted hospital mortality of women compared to men for each diagnosis using weighted linear regression. Results: As the percentage women within each diagnosis increased, the adjusted mortality of women compared to men with that same diagnosis decreased (regression coefficient, -0.015; 99% CI; -0.020 to -0.011;  $P < 0.001$ ) and the illness severity of women compared to men at ICU admission decreased. This minority effect was also observed across hospitals: patients admitted to ICUs with relatively few patients of their sex had a higher hospital mortality compared to the 'majority' sex for that ICU. Conclusion: Sex balance in diagnostic groups was inversely associated with both the adjusted mortality and illness severity of women compared to men. In diagnoses with relatively few women, women were more likely to die than men; in diagnoses with fewer men, men were more likely to die than women.

**Dr Lucy Modra** is a Senior Clinical Fellow at University of Melbourne's Department of Critical Care and Intensive Care Consultant at Austin Health. She is undertaking a PhD examining sex differences in the illness severity, treatment and outcomes of ICU patients.

# Women, risk information and digital literacy during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia

CITRA INDAH LESTARI (SHE/HER)

Women experience multiple vulnerabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Women are likely to hold more domestic and care responsibilities, and higher level of stress. The economic impact has impacted women disproportionately as women earn less, are more likely to hold informal jobs, or do not have power over family income. The gendered risk affects women's risk perception during the pandemic, while the uncertainty, unclear information, and overload of misinformation make the seeking and processing of risk information problematic. Consequently, women face severe impacts, often accused of being stubborn for not following the government's suggestions or spreading hoaxes. This research investigates how the low-income women in Indonesia perceive risks of COVID-19, how they access risk information, and how they act upon the information amidst the socio-economy changes, gendered risks, and digital literacy. This presentation provides literature reviews on gendered risk, risk communication dynamics in Indonesia, and the digital divide experienced by women in Indonesia. It explores the gap in the existing model of Risk Information Seeking and Processing that has not yet taken into account the gendered risk and digital divide, which potentially alienates women who are subject to gendered risk, have limited access to information, and lack of digital literacy.

**Citra Indah Lestari** is a first year PhD student at the Asia Institute, Faculty of Arts, University of Melbourne. Her research aims to investigate the Risk Information Accessing and Processing by low-income women in Indonesia who are subject to gendered risk and socio-economy changes in the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to her study, she was a Risk Communication Specialist for the Australia Indonesia Partnership for Health Security in Indonesia.

# A matter of life and death: fostering a safe crisis accommodation landscape

**ERIKA MARTINO (SHE/HER)**

There is a crisis within crisis accommodation in Australia whereby victim-survivors of domestic and family violence cannot access safe accommodation and services. Inadequate provision and policy disconnect renders women invisible, underwriting a harm-amplification process that re-traumatises and further marginalises women. To delve into the heart of this crisis in Victoria, we worked with victim-survivors to co-design a Zine that highlights the reality of navigating this system of scarcity and neglect, its impacts, what they need and how we can fix this crisis. We illustrate how poor housing support, design and access can re-traumatise women and exacerbate feelings of invisibility, shame, and dehumanisation. In reflecting on these insights, we suggest that the path towards individual recovery starts with the healing of our crisis response system through better funding and resourcing, more diverse housing and service options, and a collaborative support system based on respect, trust, and inclusion.

**Erika Martino** is a Research Fellow and PhD Candidate at the Centre for Health Policy, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health. Erika's research explores how housing policy, programs and partnerships can promote violence prevention and health through increased access to safe, affordable and quality housing.

# An ethnographic approach to exploring the role of social media in women's experience of urban public space

SHIVA NOURI (SHE/HER)

How people experience public urban space is increasingly mediated by social media. Recognizing the embeddedness of social media in cities calls for urban planning practitioners and scholars to pay attention to its impact on the practices of everyday urban life. One way in which social media and its role is explored by urban scholars is by examining the use of ICT-based initiatives and data-driven approaches to planning. Urban planning lacks careful attention to the ways people use social media, and how this use enables the interaction with and the shaping of places. Drawing on feminist scholarship, I seek to understand how women's experience of public space is closely integrated with social media. I combine a sensory walking ethnography with social media ethnography, and reflect on my own experience of each through autoethnography, to explore the sensory experience of migrant women in Melbourne. This allows me to gain in-depth knowledge through constant interaction between me, participants, social media, and the place. This research proposes a replicable methodology for investigating the role of social media in the lived experience of marginalized populations in public spaces.

**Shiva Nouri** is a feminist urban planner from Iran with a master's degree in Urban Planning from the Shahid Beheshti University of Iran. She is a first-year Ph.D. candidate at the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning, University of Melbourne. Her research focuses on the relationship between migrant women, social media, and urban public spaces.

# Division of paid and unpaid work in Australian families: associations with sleep outcomes in men and women

ANNA SCOVELLE (SHE/HER)

Advances in gender equality globally have resulted in significant changes in the roles of men and women. However, while women in Australia now spend more time in paid work than ever before, they also continue to take responsibility for the majority of unpaid work. The way that paid and unpaid work is shared within a couple is important for health and wellbeing. Sleep is an important, but often neglected component of health. Poor quality and/or insufficient sleep is associated with suboptimal daytime function and adverse health outcomes. Past research indicates that men's sleep is more likely to be affected by employment related factors, while women's sleep may be more affected by couple dynamics and family demands. In this presentation I will present the findings from two studies that investigate how the division of paid and unpaid work is associated with sleep outcomes in men and women. These studies examine data from over 5000 adults, drawn from multiple waves of the Household, Income, and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey.

**Anna Scovelle** is a PhD candidate with the Melbourne School of Population and Global Health. Her research examines how gender equality and the gendered division of labour in Australian households is associated with sleep and health outcomes. Her research is funded by an NHMRC Postgraduate Scholarship. Anna is also a Research Fellow with the Australian Institute of Family Studies

# Fathering, feminism and the future of work: remote-first work and the gendered division of paid and unpaid labour

LAUREN RYAN (SHE/HER)

Parents attempting to use flexible work arrangements (FWAs) to manage their work and family responsibilities are often plagued by barriers and negative consequences including workplace discrimination, career stagnation, loss of income and social stigmatisation. This has resulted in challenging employment conditions and widening gender inequality for mothers and historically low uptake of FWAs for caregiving by fathers. Previous sociological and business management research into the implications of FWAs on working parents has largely focused on accommodation strategies, which allow employees to opt-in to certain forms of flexible work. Remote-first (in contrast) is an emerging form of work organisation universally applied across a whole organisation and designed to increase employee autonomy, provide location- and time-agnostic work environments, and facilitate asynchronous work practices to simplify and support the integration of work and family responsibilities. This research aims to critically examine how remote-first allows working parents to organise their work and family lives, with a particular focus on implications for the gendered division of paid and unpaid labour. The symposium paper will provide a detailed overview of the remote-first model, outline how it differs from existing forms of flexible and remote work, and present a critical examination of its anticipated gendered impacts for working parents.

**Lauren Ryan** is a PhD Candidate at the University of Melbourne with expertise in gender and development, women's economic insecurity, caregiving, unpaid labour, parental leave policies and the gendered implications of the future of work. She has a Bachelor of Arts (Honours), a Masters of Social Policy (First Class Honours, Faculty of Arts Dean's Honours List 2020) and is currently completing a PhD (Arts). Professionally, Lauren is a gender and social performance consultant working with international clients to improve diversity, equity and inclusion standards, policies, and outcomes. Outside of work and study Lauren is the Co-Founder and CEO of The Global Women's Project (an Australian non-profit organisation dedicated to women's vocational training and economic empowerment in Nepal, Cambodia, and Burundi).

# Gender dynamics in community volunteering practices

**DOMINICA MEADE (SHE/HER)**

Australia is facing a volunteer shortage that poses a serious threat to urban and regional communities. Women have been disproportionately impacted by the steady decline in the volunteer workforce, once again bearing the burden of sustaining community life and balancing family and work commitments. Whilst previous research has shown that volunteering is inherently gendered, less attention has been paid to how these gender dynamics may be contributing to poor volunteer retention rates and volunteer shortages. Using existing literature on gender dynamics in community volunteering practices, this presentation aims to better explore the female experience of volunteering as it relates to retention rates and barriers to volunteering. Preliminary findings suggest that the current literature is limited to women's experience of formal volunteering within Anglo-Celtic community organisations. To better understand the current decline in volunteering rates it would be beneficial to expand current research to informal volunteering within culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

**Dominica Meade** is conducting her research through the Melbourne Society Equity Institute in partnership with not-for-profit Volunteer West. Dominica's PhD will utilise an action-research approach to explore the gendered dynamics in volunteering and the coordination and management of volunteers.

# Hormonal contraceptives as behavioural disruptors: theory and implications

LINDSIE ARTHUR (SHE/HER)

Despite the notable benefits of hormonal contraceptive (HC) use for women worldwide, emerging evidence suggests that these commonly used medications could adversely impact psychological outcomes through alterations in neurophysiology. Less is known, however, about the functional impact of HC use on social behaviours. This talk will include two parts. First, guided by experimental research and a substantive review of over 50 studies ( $n = 19,637$ ), this talk will first explore the disruptive quality of HCs on how, within specific contexts, HC use also disrupts competitive decision making and suppresses achievement-based competitive motivation. Second, this talk will present the results of a recent longitudinal diary study (with over 3,900 observations from 21 countries), demonstrating that HCs are associated with a suppression of naturally occurring fluctuations in achievement motivation that are otherwise observed in women not using HCs. Implications for policy, public health messaging and research priorities will be discussed.

**Lindsie Arthur** is a PhD candidate at The University of Melbourne. Her current research focuses on the relationship between hormones and social behaviours among women. She is particularly interested in understanding how the menstrual cycle and hormonal contraceptives shape the strategies women use to compete for resources.

# Investigation of sustainable career for female engineers – mitigating impacts of biological reproductive inequities between sexes

MAHARTI TRIHARTA (SHE/HER)

In the male-dominated engineering profession, extensive efforts and campaigns have been directed toward attracting female students to the engineering profession. Yet, the proportion of female engineers in the labour force is still low. While the issues of female engineers' retention have been addressed over the past two decades, substantial attrition in the mid-career stage at the age of 30 and over remains pertinent. There are pieces of evidence of workplace cultures resulting in the spectre of reproductive choices in the engineering profession, with several statistical findings from other studies underpinning low fertility among female engineers. However, there is not any direct evidence linking the two issues. This proposed research aims to understand how the social implication of innate biological reproductive timing differences between sexes creates inequities in the gendered, fast-changing, and dynamic engineering occupational context. The issues are perceived through a theoretical concept of a sustainable career. This concept frames person-career fit crossing several changes in external dimensions over time, striving for longevity and sustainability of a career. In this symposium, the narrative literature review conducted to define the gaps will be discussed, and the novelties of the proposed research will be outlined.

**Maharti Triharta** is a PhD scholar of FEIT/MSEI. Prior to her candidacy, she has 10 years of experience as a Petroleum Engineer, followed by a shift to environmental engineering where she gains a passion for sustainability. This research is personal as she witnessed the low retention rate of female engineers and pursues to discover sustainable career pathways that consider inborn reproductive biological inequities for female engineers as women of science.

# The kanal and urban queer worldmaking in metropolitan Manila

IAN RAFAEL RAMIREZ (HE/THEY)

Kanal or gutter, commonly the passageways of water and waste in metropolitan Manila, names a contemporary embodied practice in Philippine urban queer modernity that deviates from what is orderly, tasteful, and respectable. It usually manifests in the artistic, cultural, and life-making practices of the bakla — a local gender identity construction in the Philippines. Colloquially, to be hailed as baklang kanal is a pejorative that implies a filthy, disorderly, and messy faggot but it has been recently reclaimed by progressive queer individuals on Twitter to mean warriors of social justice. This research project will problematise the multiple meanings of kanal vis-a-vis urban queer worldmaking in the Philippines. More specifically, this research plans to examine the multiple embodiments of being a baklang kanal and understand their relations to the broader socio-political contexts in which they unfold. Deploying decolonial queerness as a lens, this project will curate an archive of baklang kanal performances, both in in-person and digital artistic and cultural productions and in everyday life, to make sense of baklang kanal notions from the ways of knowing, sensing, and being of the self-proclaimed baklang kanals whom this research will interrogate.

**Ian Rafael Ramirez** is currently a PhD student at The University of Melbourne. He is invested in the (every day) performances of the bakla in the Philippines and is committed to looking at their life-making practices as sites of forging alternative ways of being in the world. His previous research works focused on queer nightlife, drag scenes, and virtual drag performances in Metro Manila, Philippines

# The emergence of anti-gender movements within the context of Australia: discourses, practices and ethical considerations

JO CHURCH (SHE/HER)

Since the mid-2000's, anti-gender movements have gained momentum within the Global North. Mobilising against the notion of 'gender ideology' or more broadly the concept of 'gender', anti-gender movements often blame feminists, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) activists of spreading a dangerous ideology which variously seeks to destroy the heterosexual nuclear family, corrupt the minds of innocent and vulnerable children and/or defy the laws of 'nature' and/or 'common-sense'. Although anti-gender movements have religious connections, particularly within the Catholic Church and the global Christian Right (Datta, 2021), their activism is often grounded in a secular, scientific and human rights discourse (Denkovski, Bernarding and Lunz 2021, p. 12). Increasingly, this discourse can appear as 'feminist' through arguments which vilify transwomen in the name of protecting 'women's sex-based rights'. Following scholars such as Kuhar and Patternotte (2017), Nash and Browne (2020) and Graff and Korolczuk (2022), this paper contends that anti-gender movements are not simply the continuation of a backlash to gender or LGBTQ rights but rather part of a new political configuration aimed at promoting an alternative social and political order, one which is less democratic and less liberal. Mobilising individuals through a politics of fear and shame, anti-gender movements seek out those most disaffected by liberal democracy by blaming 'gender' for a perceived or actual loss of privilege. Discussing this within the context of Australia, this paper will explore how this is discursively achieved by examining anti-gender discourses on social media. Following these discourses across Facebook, this paper will also explore their connective action to various "anti-publics" (Davis, 2019) while discussing the consequences of this for the development of gender and sexual rights. Overall, this paper contends that feminist energies needed to counter these movements must stem from a place of deeper understanding. We must avoid treating these movements as a mere 'backlash' and instead seek to understand those mobilised to the anti-gender cause, and the contexts which give rise to social and political dissatisfaction.

**Jo Church** is a PhD candidate in the School of Social and Political Sciences. She is researching the global phenomenon of 'anti-gender movements' while situating her research within the context of Australia.

# What is young women's empowerment? Understanding the messiness and contestation

ANNIE DOUGLAS (SHE/HER)

A surge of attention on empowering young women in international development programs arose in the late 2000s, when organisations including the World Bank and the Nike Foundation argued it was critical to achieving economic growth and poverty alleviation. Since then, many strategies and academic papers have been written about young women, including why empowering young women is a good thing, and how to do it. But what do young women think about empowerment, and why or whether it's a good thing? In this presentation, I will highlight that empowerment is a buzzword – fuzzy, contested and messy – emphasising there is a tension in the way that some development agencies position young women as instruments for achieving benefits to communities, states and firms, while other organisations, and young women themselves, position young women as agents who are complex and have their own goals and desires. I will outline the literature on this topic, and highlight the gap, which I intend to fill with my PhD research project, around deepening our understanding of what empowerment means to young women in the Pacific, and how this understanding can challenge the way that empowerment is conceptualised by dominant development actors and in high-level development strategies.

**Annie Douglas** is a PhD student at the University of Melbourne. She has experience with an Australian youth not-for-profit, Oaktree, and has facilitated youth-led project evaluations and project design workshops with young people in Timor-Leste. In her time at Oaktree, she also co-authored a Youth Participation in Development Practice Note, a guide for development practitioners on facilitating meaningful youth engagement, published by the Australian Council for International Development.

*Video presentation will be available via <https://go.unimelb.edu.au/n2me>*



# Global policies and impediments to gender equality in education

**KATRINA LAWRENCE-HONEYCOMBE (SHE/HER)**

Since signing onto the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, governments in the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia have shown a renewed interest in researching, producing, and publishing policies and legislation addressing aspects of gender equity; in many instances, this arises through attention to violence against women, the persistence of which has been described as not only a terrible ‘secret’ but as also pointing to the failure of gender equity policies to achieve fundamental change in gender relations. However, according to the Global Gender Gap Report of 2022, it will take another 132 years to close the global gender gap. In this context, this paper seeks to explore the factors that are inhibiting the success of these gender equality initiatives and ask whether contemporary gender equity policies and frameworks sufficiently acknowledge the structures of power through which gender inequality originates. Choosing to focus specifically on education, a place in which the fight against gender inequality seems to have become but a secondary agenda, my research seeks to investigate, firstly, how these new gender equality initiatives are being contextualised and framed within the education field, and secondly, explore how the wider macro policies of international non-governmental institutions have influenced these policies and frameworks.

**Katrina Lawrence-Honeycombe** is a first year PhD candidate working with the Social Transformation and Education Hub within the Melbourne Graduate School of Education. Her interests are in gender equity, education, and literature.

# For self, community, and the environment: the rural women's activism of Nagar Valley, Pakistan

RASHID HAIDERI (HE/HIM)

In the context of Pakistan, scholars have approached women's activism mostly from perspective of case studies with a focus on how women's activism relates to women's positionality vis-a-vis the state, patriarchy, and class in which structures of power and values are interrogated for perpetuating gender inequity and thus the need for women to contest them through activism. With some cases focusing on women's activism as an expression of pious self-actualization, the conceptualization of women's agency is restricted to the three frameworks – secular, religious, and pious. Another noticeable trend is the urban-centric concentration – there is an underlying assumption that it is primarily urban Pakistani women who act. In fact, little attention has been directed towards women's activism in rural, indigenous contexts or beyond the dominant discourse of contestation of state, power, and identity. In contrast, based on an empirically distinctive ethnographic study of an activism led by rural, indigenous women in Gilgit-Baltistan, I argue that the contemporary paradigms are insufficient in helping us understand the motivations of these rural women, as their agency cuts across the secular, religious, and pious. Moreover, in addition to turning away from the urban-centric purveyance, I call for expanding the taken-for-granted-ness about the motivations for women's activism in Pakistan beyond the state, patriarchy, and religion paradigms.

**Rashid Haideri** is a PhD candidate and a Graduate Research Teaching Fellow in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Melbourne, Australia. His PhD project is an ethnographic study of an emerging rural women's movement in Northern Pakistan.

# Women and music on stage during the Spanish Civil War

**YOLANDA ACKER (SHE/HER)**

Coming in the wake of the concession of women's suffrage in Spain and the declaration of the Second Republic in 1931, the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) can be viewed as an exemplary case for studying the involvement of women in conflict. New research into the role of women in major conflicts has begun to readdress male-centric narratives. However, this scholarship has tended to concentrate on isolated political figures and the incorporation of women at the front, as munitions workers or volunteer nurses. Music is still largely absent from these discussions. The subject of my post-doctoral proposal, my project aims to broaden the scope of scholarship on the role of women during the Spanish Civil War, considering the contribution made by women in the musical and cultural spheres. In doing so, it seeks to document and analyse the role of women in a range of facets of music making in the conflict for the first time, helping to balance skewed historical accounts and contribute to a wider discussion on women, music and conflict. It will contemplate women as activists, using their roles as singers, dancers, musicians and composers to promote propagandistic and political messages.

**Dr Yolanda Acker** completed her PhD in Musicology at ANU in 2020. For many years she lived in Madrid and publishes on twentieth-century Spanish music/dance. She is an experienced translator and Visiting Fellow at the Research School of Humanities and the Arts, ANU. She works in Research/Academic Support at the UoM.

