

SYMPOSIUM

A Compassionate Mind Approach to Gender Identity, Diversity and Equality

Chair: Fiona Ashworth



Understanding Gender in the Context of Compassion

Laura Silberstein
drsilberstein@icloud.com

The evolution of caring, and the process of compassion that arises from it, is often seen as female and maternal based. The over-identification of caring-compassion with gender can have many undesirable consequences including the exclusion of women from domains of social competition, leadership and power and the dismissal of compassion in men as being too 'feminine' and lacking toughness. In this talk we will discuss gender differences research in regards to compassionate mind processes and how CFT can address old ways of understanding and responding to gender and gender roles. In addition, we will explore how an evolutionary, social constructivist based compassionate focus can challenge these reified, binary gender and stereotypic gender roles constructs of compassion and the suffering they cause. We will also address, what CFT brings to the current movement for gender equality and how women or men should not be forced into gender based stereotypic ways relating. Instead, all individuals should be afforded the freedom to choose how they want to be in their world or how they can effectively exert influence in cultural, political and leadership discourse and roles.

Suffering, Gender Identities and Compassion

Hannah Gilbert

Hannah.e.gilbert@gmail.com

It is generally recognised that suffering, and the experience of suffering, plays a significant role in both public and private life, and that such experiences are cross-cultural. Indeed, all cultures recognise this, and have various ways in which they address, explain, tolerate or seek to relieve it. Anthropological literature has repeatedly demonstrated the differences in social expectations of how suffering is *allowed* to be manifested. Drawing on a range of cross-cultural examples, this talk will examine some of the ways in which the experience of individual suffering is communicated in different societies, with a focus on how feminine and masculine identities are negotiated, and the influence of such.

The talk explores my past research on masculinities and war, and the problems with trying to maintain social norms where masculinity must be associated with emotional hardness during extreme cultural trauma. It will explore how a compassionate approach to suffering, with a view to cross cultural gender identities and their social norms, is important.

The Mobilisation of Women in Post-Conflict Peace-Building: A Gendered and CFT Perspective

kisane.prutton@prutton.co.uk

Hailed as a landmark, Resolution 1325 (2000) of the United Nations Security Council called for the equal participation and full involvement of women in peacebuilding and in the prevention and resolution of conflict. More than simple gender equality, women's leadership was declared a central component of future peacekeeping efforts. However, 15 years later a review of member states' implementation of Resolution 1325 (Coomaraswamy, 2015), found more evidence of political rhetoric than action. Rather than being surprised by this, this paper asks what if we were to look at the institution of peacebuilding through an evolutionary, compassion focused lens? How might our understanding of women's experiences of conflict-related violence, including sexual abuse and trafficking, explain their capacity to engage in post-conflict peacebuilding?

Coomaraswamy, R. (2015). Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1325. UN Women.

Not Ashamed to Love: A CFT Approach to Shamed-Based Difficulties in Sexual Minorities. Insights and Research Data from Cross-Sectional and Interventions Studies

Nicola Petrocchi, Ph.D.

John Cabot University- Rome

Compassionate Mind Italia- Rome

Although shame is ubiquitous, sexual minorities such as LGBT communities are particularly characterized by high levels of shame and self-criticism. Much of these relate to the internalization of sexual prejudice and stigma (e.g., internalized homophobia), anticipation of future stressful events (e.g, rejection sensitivity), and the concealment of one's sexual identity, all of which affect mental and physical health of LGBT individuals. Compassion-focused therapy focuses on shame and self-criticism as key processes in the explanation of the onset and maintenance of pathological suffering. It is therefore an ideal approach to help individuals experiencing both their external and internal worlds as hostile, which is often the case for LGBT individuals with high internalized homophobia. After a brief review of findings on the link between internalized homophobia, shame, and mental and physical health, the relationships of positive identity, soothing positive affect, perceived social safeness and self-criticism of LGBT individuals will be discussed. Findings from a recent Compassion-Focused Therapy on-line program for sexual minority young adults with depressive symptomatology will be presented.