Book of Abstracts

Intersex Insights

Heritage, visibility and recognition

9-11 June, 2025

Dublin City University (DCU)
St Patrick's Campus and Online

Funded by
the European Union

Health
Research
Board

DCU
Ollscoil Chathair
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

This is the final event of CHRISALIS, a two-year project funded by the European Union under the Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Programme, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowship scheme (Grant ID: 101067189)

Intersex Insights is also supported by the Health Research Board through the Conference and Event Sponsorship Scheme (CES-2025-019).

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- Dr Tanya Ní Mhuirthile, Dublin City University (Ireland)
- Dr Daniela Crocetti, Research Fellow, Intersex Esiste (Italy)

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- Manuela Falzone, representative of Intersex Esiste, Italy
- Dr Dan Christian Ghattas, Executive Director of Organisation Intersex International Europe (OII Europe)
- Professor Peter Hegarty, The Open University and Psychosocial Studies Intersex International (PSI-I), UK

Intersex, Ireland and Pride Flags at DCU St Patrick's Campus. Credits: Marta Prandelli

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Welcome and Introduction

We are delighted to welcome you to *Intersex Insights*, an international and interdisciplinary conference dedicated to intersex scholarship, policy, and community. With 165 delegates participating - approximately 100 of them in person - from across Europe, North and South America, Oceania, Africa, and Asia, this event reflects a truly global commitment to deepening our understanding of intersex lives, rights, and realities.

Intersex Insights brings together academics, advocates, artists, healthcare professionals, policy experts, and people with lived experience to explore critical questions about bodies, care, and justice, and to reflect on the present and future of intersex studies. It is the culminating event of the CHRISALIS Project, a research initiative examining how cultural values, moral assumptions, and institutional narratives shape health and policy landscapes for people with variations of sex characteristics in Ireland and Italy. Rooted in these two contexts but informed by international perspectives, CHRISALIS has sought to investigate not only what is, but what might still be possible. This conference builds on that work by offering a platform to share stories, scholarship, and strategies for social transformation.

This is more than a gathering of papers and panels. It is a space for continuity and community, a space to de-silo knowledge, challenge inherited assumptions, and collectively imagine alternative futures. At a time when rigid binaries and exclusionary narratives are being reasserted across many parts of the world, *Intersex Insights* responds with critical reflection and creative resistance. Together, we ask not only what is, but what could yet become.

Through keynote lectures, panels, exhibitions, film screenings, and a special roundtable on care, collaboration, and policy, *Intersex Insights* centres the insights of people with lived experience, as well as those of key stakeholders and experts from a range of disciplines. We are also proud to host the first-ever Early Career Researcher Day in Intersex Studies, a signal of our commitment to supporting new voices and sustaining the future of the field through curiosity, care, and collaboration.

We hope this conference offers not only information, but inspiration: a space to reflect, connect, learn, and hold onto what matters.

On behalf of the organising team, thank you for being part of *Intersex Insights*.

Welcome.

Dr Marta Prandelli
Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellow
Dublin City University, Ireland

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all those whose contributions made *Intersex Insights* possible.

This conference was supported by the *European Union* through the Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Programme, under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowship scheme (Grant ID: 101067189) and by the *Health Research Board* of Ireland through its Conference Event Sponsorship Scheme (CES-2025-019). The Early Career Researcher Day was supported by *Psychosocial Studies Intersex – International* (PSI-I), whose commitment to fostering emerging scholarship in intersex studies made both the online seminar series for Early Career Researchers and this in-person initiative possible.

The event was convened by a cross-faculty organising committee at Dublin City University, reflecting the collaborative spirit of the event and the university's Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, the Faculty of Science and Health, and the DCU Institute of Education. We are deeply grateful to the volunteer team, whose time, energy, and generosity helped make the event run smoothly.

Sincere thanks go to the CHRISALIS Advisory Board, whose insight and generosity shaped the direction of the project: *Dr Adeline Berry*, Senior Research Fellow at the University of Huddersfield and representative of Intersex Ireland; *Manuela Falzone*, representative of Intersex Esiste; *Dr Dan Christian Ghattas*, Executive Director of OII Europe; and *Professor Peter Hegarty*, Professor at The Open University and Chair of Psychosocial Studies Intersex International (PSI-I).

We would also like to acknowledge the invaluable technical support provided by *Patrick Doyle* and *Justin Dawson*, Senior Technical Officers at the DCU School of Nursing, Psychotherapy and Community Health, as well as our dedicated tech volunteers, Caleb Doyle and Ethan Doyle. Their work ensured the smooth delivery of many aspects of the event, both in person and online.

We are honoured to acknowledge the contributions of our keynote speakers, *Crystal Hendricks* (ILGA World) and *Professor Katrina Roen* (University of Waikato), whose insights grounded the conference in critical care and reflection. We thank *Dr Sean Saifa Wall* for moderating the roundtable on policy, care, and collaboration, and *Kimberly Zieselman* for introducing her short film *Common as Red Hair*, which brought powerful storytelling into our programme. We are also grateful to *Mel Kurutta* for sharing their art exhibition *UNNATURALLY WOMAN*, which added a vital visual and emotional dimension to the event.

A special thank you goes to Michela Pasini from Be-Nice studio, who designed the conference logo and visual identity with creativity and care.

Finally, we recognise those who could not be present due to systemic barriers, visa denials, or funding constraints. Their absence reminds us of the ongoing work required to make academic and activist spaces genuinely accessible and equitable.

To everyone who contributed to *Intersex Insights*, whether on stage, behind the scenes, or in the audience, thank you. Your work, presence, and commitment have helped shape a space of reflection, connection, and transformation.

Code of Conduct

Attendees at all sessions, activities, and social events, including speakers, sponsors, and volunteers, are expected to adhere to and respect the following Code of Conduct. We aim to create a safe, friendly, and enjoyable environment to learn, network, and enjoy the event, free from discrimination or harassment.

Harassment includes offensive verbal comments, disrespectful and pathologizing language inconsistent with human rights standards, deliberate intimidation, stalking, following, harassment, photography or recording without explicit consent, sustained disruption of talks or other events, inappropriate physical contact, and unwelcome sexual attention.

This conference is a safe space for people with intersex variations and those interested in intersex issues to share their research, advocacy work, and experiences.

Expected Behaviour for All Attendees

1. **Professional and Constructive Communication**: Maintain courtesy and civility when handling dissent or disagreement and show respect when providing feedback. Aggression will not be tolerated.
2. **Respect for All**: Be respectful to all attendees and speakers. Maintain openness to different points of view and be responsible when sharing information about the organization or any attendees via social media and public communication channels.
3. **Inclusivity**: Support people of all backgrounds, abilities, neuro-divergences, bodies, genders, sexualities, and identities.
4. **Media/Press Identification**: If you are a member of the media/press, please identify yourself to all attendees by wearing the identifying lanyards.
5. **Consent for Photography/Recording**: Obtain permission from participants and speakers before taking pictures or recording videos of them and/or their presentations, including slides.
6. **Language and Imagery**: Avoid using stigmatizing or pathologizing language and visual imagery, unless it reflects language and imagery used in historical material or collected data (e.g., verbatim quotes from interviews with individuals not bound by the code of conduct). We recommend using a trigger warning before presenting such language or imagery.
7. **Prohibited Behaviour**: Avoid discriminatory or harassing behaviour, including intimidating, demeaning, bullying, or threatening speech or actions, and persistent and unwelcome solicitation of emotional or physical intimacy.
8. **Respect for Gender Identities and Pronouns**: Be respectful of individuals' self-defined gender identities and pronouns.
9. **Chaired Events**: All events will be chaired. Speakers will have time to receive questions after their presentation. Please wait for the chair to invite questions.

Expected Behaviour for Speakers

1. **Time Management**: Keep your presentation within the allocated time and respect the chair's guidance regarding time.
2. **Relevance and Respect**: Stay on topic and do not address interpersonal, academic, inter-activist, or other disputes in your paper.
3. **Sensitive Imagery**: Be aware that visual imagery may be upsetting to some attendees and seek consent before showing images of people.
4. **Documentation of Consent**: You might be asked to show documentation of consent for data collection and for showing images of people during your presentations. Screenshots of emailed consent will be acceptable if names and details are clear.

Participants asked to stop any prohibited and harassing behaviour are expected to comply immediately.

Agreement to this Code of Conduct acknowledges that possible actions for its violation include but are not limited to a verbal warning and removal from an event without a refund.

We trust that this Code of Conduct reflects the views of our participants

Conference Programme

DAY 1 - 9 JUNE 2025

08:00 – 09:00: Registration & Networking Block E entrance, DCU St Patrick's Campus

Welcome Session

09:00 – 10:00
E214 - Ann Louise Gilligan Lecture Theatre

- Professor Dáire Keogh, President, Dublin City University
- Miltos Pavlou, Senior Programme Manager, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
- Dr Marta Prandelli, Marie Skłodowska Curie Postdoctoral Fellow, Dublin City University

Moderated by **Dr Tanya Ní Mhuirthile**

Keynote

10:00 – 11:00
E214 - Ann Louise Gilligan Lecture Theatre

Beyond Binaries - Intersex Wellbeing, Culture, and the Power of Policy

Crystal Hendricks Bio
Chair: Dr Marta Prandelli

Coffee Break

11:00 – 11:30
E Block Foyer

Parallel Session 1

11:30 – 13:00

Session 1.1 **Rethinking the 'Best Interests' of Intersex Children** Room: E201	Session 1.2 **Reimagining Intersex: Art, Literature, and Identity** Room E203	Session 1.3 **Psychosocial Care: Mental Health and Support** Room E205
Chair: Martin Gramc	**Chair: David Griffiths**	**Chair: Daniela Crocetti**
Best Interests, Worst Assumptions? German Courts and Surgeries on Intersex Children Nick Markwald (Europa-University Flensburg) & Lena Emil Kramheller, (Universität zu Lübeck) ***'Sex-normalising' medical interventions for intersex minors: Changing perspectives on the 'best interests of the child'*** Maxime Castermans (University of Antwerp) ***Regulating medical interventions on minors with IVSC: Assessing the options*** Aileen Kennedy (University of Technology Sydney) ***Law reform to regulate medical interventions on intersex people: how, what, where and why?*** Morgan Carpenter (University of Sydney)	***Art as a tool to tackle intersex situated hermeneutic injustice*** Adeline Berry (University of Huddersfield) & Christopher North (Independent Advocate, Artivist, Author and Storyteller) ***Understandings of Intersexuality in Current Novels*** Dean Leetal (Kibbutzim College) ***UNNATURALLY WOMAN*** Mel Kurutta (Italy) ***"An Elsewhere to the Elsewhere": Queer Corporeality and Juliana Huxtable's Intersex Aesthetics"*** Avik Sarkar (University of Oxford)	***InterLink – Intersex psychosocial health and wellbeing*** Bonnie Hart (Interlink / InterAction Australia) ***Where are the Good Intersex (VSD) Counsellors and What Do They Need to Know?*** Cynthia Mulit (Beyond the Binary) ***The Role of MDTs Psychologists in the Management of Variations of Sex Characteristics in Italy. The point of view of those directly affected.*** Manuela Falzone (Intersex Esiste) ***Mental Health Experiences of People with Variations in Sex Characteristics (VSC): Findings from the Being LGBTQI+ study*** Thelma Begley (Trinity College Dublin), et al..

Lunch

13:00 – 14:00
E Block Foyer

Parallel Session 2

14:00 – 15:15

Session 2.1 **Intersex Rights: Legal, Political, and Cultural Perspectives** Room E201	Session 2.2 **Intersex Education: Awareness, Inclusion and Training** Room E203	Session 2.3 **Reimagining Intersex Futures: Identity, Time, and Intersectionality** Room E205
Chair: Ruth Baldacchino	**Chair: Clara Barry**	**Chair: Morgan Carpenter**
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Self-Determination and Right-wing Populism: Effects on Intersex Policy in Germany Angelika Von Wahl (Lafayette College)	***Challenging Stigma and Promoting Inclusion: Insights into Swiss Trainee Teachers' Knowledge of and Attitudes Towards Intersex People*** Marie-Lou Nussbaum (University of Bern)	***Inter Time: Harnessing Queer & Crip Time to Reimagine Intersex Futures*** Tori Dudys & Celeste Orr (University of New Brunswick)
Navigating Body Politics in Shīʿi Legal Tradition: Examining Sayyid Kāẓim al-Yazdī's Account of Non-Binary Intersex Mehrdad Alipour (Utrecht University)	***The awareness of intersex in the SPHE Specification for Junior Cycle in Ireland*** Macarena Murugarren (Dublin City University)	***Scoping the field of Intersex Studies: Erasures and new possibilities*** Surya Monro (Loughborough University)

Coffee Break

15:15 – 15:45
E Block Foyer

Parallel Session 3

15:45 – 17:15

Session 3.1 **Language, Communication, and Counter-Narratives in Intersex Representation** Room E201	Session 3.2 **Critical Historical Perspectives on Intersex** Room E203	Session 3.3 **Global Intersex Activism: Strategies for Change** Room E205
Chair: Peter Hegarty	**Chair: Celeste McNamara**	**Chair: Janik Bastien-Charlebois**
Constructing counternarratives? Reviewing discourses on intersex joy, happiness, and celebration Amets Suess Schwend (Andalusian School of Public Health) ***Feedback towards the Nomenclature Change of the intersex*** Keiko Irie (The University of Kitakyushu) ***"A Quality of Heart, of Presence, and of Really Caring": Towards Affirmative Intersex Health Communication in Canada*** Terese Knoppers (McGill University), et al. ***'Chinese… what is the best word?': Impenetrable English vs unintelligible translations in Hong Kong hospitals*** Brian King (University of Hong Kong)	***Hermaphrodites and Gender Classification in Roman Law: Ulpian's Contribution to Legal Identity*** Giuseppe Di Donato (Edinburgh Napier University) ***The impact of surgeon Lennox Ross Broster on intersex care in 1930s and '40s Britain, and its continued legacy today*** Clare Tebbutt (Ireland) ***Disorders and Identities: Clinical Sex and Gender in Britain in 1969*** David Griffiths (University of Surrey) ***The Enlightenment and the Fantasy of Sexual Binarism*** Perrine Gaudry (Emory University)	***The State of Intersex Organizing*** Erin Vlahović (Astrea Foundation) as presenter ***The context and goals of the Australian intersex movement*** Morgan Carpenter (University of Sydney) ***Advancing Intersex Rights and Awareness in Congo: The Role of GIDE in Societal Change*** Ginette Ntumbi (GIDE – Congo) ***Medical violence, the need to change, and intersex activists disrupting*** Mir Abe Marinus (NNID -Netherlands)

Creative Voices: 'Common as Red Hair' Presentation

17:30 – 18:30

E214 - Ann Louise Gilligan Lecture Theatre

Kimberly Zeiselman

Book Launch

18:30 – 19:30
D106 – The Quad
Official launch of the book *Intersex, Variations of Sex Characteristics, DSD: Critical Approaches*
by Surya Monro, Adeline Berry, Morgan Carpenter, Daniela Crocetti, Sean Saifa Wall
Moderated by: Dr Celeste Orr

Social Dinner

19:30 – 21:00
D106 – The Quad

DAY 2 - 10 JUNE 2025

08:30 – 09:00: Registration & Networking Block E entrance, DCU St Patrick's Campus

Keynote

09:00 – 10:00
E214 - Ann Louise Gilligan Lecture Theatre

Psychosocial approaches, decolonising knowledges: critical perspectives on intersex research and healthcare

Professor Katrina Roen Bio
Chair: Dr Marta Prandelli

Parallel Session 4

10:00 – 11:15

Session 4.1 **Caregiving, Disclosure, and Family Dynamics in Intersex Healthcare** Room E201	Session 4.2 **Intersex Wellbeing through Medical, Societal, and Cultural Perspectives** Room E203	Session 4.3 **Advancing Intersex Healthcare: Collaboration, Education, and Inclusion** Room E205
Chair: Gráinne Collins	**Chair: Saskia Ravesloot**	**Chair: Adeline Berry**
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Coffee Break

11:15 – 11:45
E Block Foyer

Parallel Session 5

11:45 – 13:15

Session 5.1 **Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare for Intersex People: Needs, Challenges, and Support** Room E201	Session 5.2 **Intersex Voices: Rights, Autonomy, and Global Perspectives** Room E203	Session 5.3 **Intersex Rights: Shaping Healthcare, Law, and Justice** Room E205
Chair: David Gibson	**Chair: Tanya Ní Mhuirthile**	**Chair: Janine Silga**
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Lunch

13:15 – 14:30
E Block Foyer

Final Roundtable

14:30 – 16:00

- Adeline Berry (Intersex Ireland)
- Manuela Falzone (Intersex Esiste)
- Maddalena Bianchi (OII Europe - Organisation Intersex International Europe)
- Luna Laura Liboni (ICCL - Irish Council for Civill Liberties)
- Claudio Uberti (Certi Diritti)
- Ellsworth Camilleri (Council of Europe SOGIESC - Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics – Unit)
-

Moderated by **Dr Sean Saifa Wall** Bio

Closing Remarks and Farewell

16:00 – 17:00

Abstracts and Key Contributors' Biographies

DAY 1 - 9 JUNE 2025

Keynote 1 – Crystal Hendricks

Beyond Binaries - Intersex Wellbeing, Culture, and the Power of Policy

Video

Crystal Hendricks (*she/her*) is a queer intersex feminist womxn. She is a human rights defender who has been at the forefront of advocating for policy change for intersex people.

Crystal was the Intersex Programme Officer at Iranti, a regional organisation based in South Africa, and the acting administrator for Intersex South Africa. Crystal is also a former Rainbow Advocacy fellowship scholar. She served as the Chair of the ILGA World Intersex Steering Committee and is a current Advisory Board member of the Intersex Human Rights Fund. Crystal has over 7 years of experience working within the intersex movement.

Her desire to see intersex people freely exercising their rights and freedoms drives her to work tirelessly to ensure that intersex issues are the leading edge of policy discussions, and that intersex people are at the helm of driving such conversations.

In her free time, she loves spending time with her family and enjoys watching the occasional musical.

Parallel Session 1

Parallel Session 1.1 – Rethinking the 'Best Interest' of Intersex Children

11:30 – 13:00

Room E201

Best Interests, Worst Assumptions? German Courts and Surgeries on Intersex Children

Nick Markwald, Europa-University Flensburg (Germany); Lena Emil Kramheller, Universität zu Lübeck (Germany)

Abstract

In Germany, §1631e Civil Code allows parents to consent to surgeries that adjust their child's bodily appearance to normative ideals of male or female, provided the surgeries are deemed medically necessary. However, such consent requires authorization by a family court. One of the key courts' decision-making criteria are the best interests of the child. Based on a qualitative analysis of 40 decisions by German courts between 2021 and 2024, we analyze courts' definitions of the best interest of the child.

Previous research demonstrates how medical guidelines refer to social and cultural norms when assigning a gender to an intersex child and surgically shaping a normatively gendered anatomy (e.g. Karkazis, 2020; Kessler 1990). By framing intersex bodies as an individualized (health) problem (Karkazis, 2020), the medicalization of intersex deflects from the westernized social constructions of the gender binary and sexual hierarchy.

We adopt these critical approaches as a framework to examine legal decision-making, thereby reflecting on the interplay between law and medicine regarding intersex. We outline the notions of a good and fulfilling life and the futures envisioned by the courts for intersex children. Grounded in an ethics of uncertainty (Rubin, 2017), we will sketch how embracing difference and centering intersex joy (Jones, 2022; Yusin, 2022) would change the perceptions reflected in the courts' decisions.

‘Sex-normalising’ medical interventions for intersex minors: Changing perspectives on the ‘best interests of the child’

Maxime Castermans, University of Antwerp (Belgium)

Abstract

‘Sex-normalising’ treatments and surgeries of intersex minors remain a highly debated issue. These interventions aim solely to conform the intersex body to societal norms of ‘typically’ male or ‘typically’ female appearance. Despite being deferrable, they are commonly performed shortly after birth and/or in (early) childhood. As a result, the affected minors often lack the capacity to provide personal informed consent, ultimately leaving the decision with parents as legal representatives. However, research indicates that such interventions can cause (irreversible) physical and psychological harm, with the potential risk of incongruence between ‘assigned’ sex and gender identity.

For a long time unquestioned, ‘sex-normalising’ interventions have recently come under scrutiny from a human rights perspective, with serious concerns raised by actors such as the Council of Europe, the United Nations, and the European Parliament. Consequently, the public understanding of what would be in the ‘best interests of the child’ in this context appears to be changing. In this presentation, I will explore the evolving interpretation of the ‘best interests of the child’-principle through the lens of recent international and supranational human rights instruments (e.g. concluding observations and general comments from UN treaty bodies, resolutions/reports from various human rights actors, and case law from the European Court of Human Rights). Subsequently, I will consider the impact of this evolving interpretation on legislative reforms in Europe, drawing attention to the role of human rights discourse in shaping domestic legal frameworks and improving the protection of intersex minors’ rights.

Regulating medical interventions on minors with IVSC: Assessing the options

Aileen Kennedy, University of Technology Sydney (Australia)

Abstract

Following recent global efforts to protect the human rights of minors with innate variations of sex characteristics (IVSC), The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) passed legislation aimed at regulating ‘normalizing’ medical interventions performed on people with IVSC on the basis of substitute consent.

During the consultation process, some argued that alternative options such as clinical self-regulation, orthodox legal constraints such as the requirement of parental consent, and Family Court interventions were sufficient to protect the interests of minors with IVSC.

This presentation will evaluate these alternatives and assess the ACT legislation against overseas measures such as the Malta legislation. Relative strengths and weaknesses of different legislative schemes will be considered.

The presentation will take into account recent literature providing analysis of the Malta legislation and other European initiatives and consider whether the ACT legislation is likely to overcome obstacles that have been identified. This analysis will generate insights which may inform the process in the Australian state of Victoria which is poised to introduce legislation in 2025 aimed at protecting people with IVSC in a medical setting.

Law reform to regulate medical interventions on intersex people: how, what, where and why?

Morgan Carpenter, Sydney Health Ethics, University of Sydney School of Public Health (Australia)

Abstract

Intersex advocates have called for an end to harmful practices in medical settings for decades, along with access to psychosocial support services. Many early attempts to enact protections from harm in Europe, Kenya and Australia have met with resistance and even non-compliance from clinicians (for example, discussion on reform in Iceland at Equal Rights Coalition 2023; clinical opposition expressed in Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate 2022). Early attempts at enacting protections lack comprehensive evaluation, and frequently exclude masculinising interventions from their scope (Carpenter 2023; Equal Rights Coalition 2023). Some researchers question the appropriateness of legislative reform, with opponents’ motivations ranging from scepticism about their success (Garland and Travis 2023) to direct opposition to regulation (Vora and Srinivasan 2020).

Yet medical interventions on children with intersex variations are already regulated in many contexts – not only in ways that seek to eliminate harmful practices, but also in ways that facilitate unnecessary early interventions. Legislation regulating medical interventions on intersex children also includes legislative jurisdiction over “special medical procedures” involving sterilisation in Australia (Kennedy 2023); exemptions from prohibitions of female genital mutilation in Canada and Australia (Carpenter 2023); exemptions to prohibitions of gender affirmation for trans youth in US States (Human Rights Watch 2022); and legislation that has facilitated access to gender recognition by trans people in Australia (Carpenter 2023).

How do we coherently address these divergent approaches to regulation? What does legislation seek to do? How does it do it? Can and should legislation regulate interventions? Who should be protected?

Parallel Session 1.2 – Reimagining Intersex: Art, Literature, and Identity

11:30 – 13:00
Room E203

Art as a tool to tackle intersex situated hermeneutic injustice

Adeline Berry, University of Huddersfield (United Kingdom); Christopher North, Independent Advocate, Artivist, Author and Storyteller (United Kingdom)

Abstract

Many intersex people are unfairly disadvantaged from childhood in their ability to render their own experiences intelligible to themselves and to others[1] and left to navigate life without positive cultural representation. Much of this epistemic injustice stems from medical policy and procedure purported to benefit intersex people[2]. Shame, stigma, secrecy, and intersex invisibility deprive many intersex people of opportunities to share their experiences with others unless they can overcome barriers to accessing intersex community or peer support. Intersex people say it can be difficult finding mental health professionals who are affordable or qualified to help them with their difficulties[3]. This paper draws on semi-structured interviews with older European intersex people conducted by Dr Berry where participants, some explicitly, spoke about employing creative mediums such as sculpture, writing, or music, to understand and express intersex experience. This paper also employs autoethnography[4], employing the authors' lived experience of using creative arts as a tool to counter intersex epistemic injustice. Art and creative expression allow intersex people and others to express themselves in an affordable way in the absence of language and accepting audiences5. The paper concludes with a discussion of creativity workshops conducted by the authors who teach participants to overcome barriers to expressing themselves.

Understandings of Intersexuality in Current Novels

Dean Leetal, Kibbutzim College (United States of America)

Abstract

The proposed paper examines different conceptualizations of intersexuality, as they appear in current day novels. The topic of intersex representation and conceptualization has, so far, been significantly underresearched. However, researchers such as Walker (2022), De Clercq (2022), and Pellegrini (2022) find that intersex representation may be a deciding factor in the way intersex people are perceived and treated. As such, it is important to further examine representations and conceptualizations of intersex people. This paper uses close reading as well as thematic text analysis to explore ten novels representing intersex people. It finds different repeated conceptualizations of intersexuality, reflecting different understandings of what being intersex means.

UNNATURALLY WOMAN

Mel Kurutta (Italy)

Abstract

In my panel, I will share the motivations and creative process that made me create my first exhibition, 'UNNATURALLY WOMAN: Existence and Resistance of an Intersex Body'. Starting from the study of materialist feminism, I then better understand what I have gone through as a (socialized) woman with natural hirsutism.

Hirsutism in women means having "excessive" body hair in a male-like pattern, it is medically treated as something monstrous. Women with hirsutism are socially treated as something monstrous. Our society, so disconnected from nature, tends to believe that if something is natural, it is perfect as it is: except for women's bodies, especially if they don't "conform" to patriarchal standards. That's where my art comes in, to reclaim the dignity of my body and to expose the violence I've experienced.

As described in the exhibition: "Being a woman in society means being in subordination to men. A woman is a victim of misogyny. In this world women are not considered human. Not yet. What can a person who was considered a girl at birth but then "looks like a boy" be considered? A mistake of nature. An error. Not somebody, but something not yet contemplated. You are even less human than those who are not human."

As I continue my personal, artistic and political journey, I aspire to create a new, direct and respectful representation and treatment of intersex women and our atypical bodies.

"An Elsewhere to the Elsewhere": Queer Corporeality and Juliana Huxtable's Intersex Aesthetics"

Avik Sarkar, University of Oxford (United Kingdom)

Abstract

"What better way to re-articulate space and time than through a body literally beyond the scope of, yet still within, the world of man (and woman)," writes Juliana Huxtable in her 2015 text piece Intersex. Huxtable is a Black intersex artist who was assigned male at birth and identifies as trans feminine; her multimedia oeuvre spans writing, painting, and DJing. She originally created Intersex for the project Gender Talents, which "engages movements and discourses for gender self-determination within trans and intersex communities internationally."

My presentation will take Huxtable's work as a point of departure to reflect on questions of intersex self-representation and cultural production, which remain undertheorized within the fields of trans studies and gender studies more broadly. According to the publisher Façadomy, "Huxtable describes a dangerous gap in the symbolic order of contemporary Western culture, where intersex bodies are rarely, if ever, eluded to. She turns to poetics to locate a place where they might be found." For Huxtable, the intersex body represents the spatial and temporal limits of the hegemonic sex/gender binary, exceeding the boundaries of man and woman while still, paradoxically, constituted by those very categories.

I will place her piece in conversation with theorist Hil Malatino's work, which suggests that intersex embodiment inhabits a realm of "neither/nor" and thereby evokes a sense of "queer corporeality." Huxtable's aesthetic practice challenges us to imagine the intersex body not as a site of abjection but rather as a space of possibility—in her words, "an elsewhere to the elsewhere."

Parallel Session 1.3 – Psychosocial Care: Mental Health and Support

11:30 – 13:00
Room E205

InterLink – Intersex psychosocial health and wellbeing

Bonnie Hart, InterLink, InterAction for Health and Human Rights (Australia)

Abstract

InterLink is a peer-led community-based psychosocial support service addressing gaps in health services through talk-based therapy, peer support, group therapy, client coordination and peer navigation for people of all ages with innate variations of sex characteristics (IVSC), and parents and carers of children with intersex variations across Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand by telehealth.

People with IVSC (intersex) are a diverse population with differing health needs that must be addressed in a timely way across all life stages, in ways that respect their rights, values, and preferences. However, this population risks, or experiences, profound stigmatisation and patholgisation that can result in poor physical, mental and sexual health outcomes through simultaneously experiencing unnecessary medical interventions earlier in life and being unable to access knowledgeable services as adults.

Interlink starts the conversation about intersex and provides multifaceted support, helping clients navigate health information, social engagement, trauma, and service access through the combined professional and lived experience expertise of InterLink staff. Tailored psychosocial support and integrated care coordination, results in people with IVSC having better health outcomes and minimised disconnection from health services.

This session will explore InterLink's unique model of care and how accessing peer-led psychosocial support assists people with IVSC gain information about their own bodies, self-acceptance, body positivity, improved self-value, health literacy, sexual health and agency in both healthcare in interpersonal relationships. Additionally, how InterLink's group program addresses isolation and provides opportunities for people connect over common experiences of physical difference.

Where are the Good Intersex (VSD) Counsellors and What Do They Need to Know?

Cynthia Mulit, Beyond the Binary Counseling and Consulting Services, LLC (United States of America)

Abstract

A common refrain is "Why go to counselors when they do not understand the issues – anatomical, biological, social, medical, and political – that affect intersex people day to day?" The problem, at least in the U.S., is related to training requirements. The 3-year Licensed Professional Counseling (LPC) curriculum will likely never provide specialized intersex training. Does this mean that the large group of LPCs will never be added to the smaller, more expensive ranks of intersex psychologists and psychiatrists? This outcome is undesirable considering the unique way that LPCs view mental health. The LPC field optimizes human potential in lieu of pathologizing people. If LPCs were trained in intersex counseling competency, they would likely immediately intuit the ethical violation of lack of autonomy in intersex infant surgical protocol. Does then the current lack of intersex training for LPCs mean that a large group of potential ally voices remain forever silent? This presentation discusses the presenter's inroads in increasing the quantity of intersex trained LPC counselors. An affirming intersex psychological identity model, the first of its kind, will be presented. Identity models are important teaching or treatment planning tools for counselors serving sexual minority populations. A new intersex specific theoretical orientation (i.e., treatment planning guide) will be discussed as well. Central to the identity model and the theoretical orientation is the unfortunate reality that intersex people are often treated in society as if they do not exist in a world falsely assumed to be binary sex only.

The Role of MDTs Psychologists in the Management of Variations of Sex Characteristics in Italy. The point of view of those directly affected.

Manuela Falzone, IntersexEsiste (Italy)

Abstract

Introduction: In Italy, the management of Variations of Sex Characteristics (VSC) lacks a clear regulatory framework and specific guidelines especially for interventions on minors. A central aspect of the management of VSC is the role of the multidisciplinary team (MDT), which should include professionals such as psychologists to ensure a person-centred approach that respects self-determination.

Methodology: This study, conducted by an intersex activist, involved five interviews with intersex adults to explore the post-traumatic consequences related to medical protocols, with a focus on communication and the hospital setting. The influence of protective factors such as laws, psychological support, peer support and role models was also investigated. Results: Psychology plays a crucial role in education, depathologising and supporting self-determination, helping to prevent harmful interventions, however, evidence and literature suggest that it is not always best utilised within multidisciplinary teams. Interviews highlight the lack of real involvement of the psychologist in MDT, the lack of up-to-date information and transparency in communication regarding decision-making processes. The importance of support groups, activism and role models also emerges.

The study highlights the urgent need for greater involvement of psychology in TDM and for protocols that include the experiences of intersex people to promote self-determination and well-being. The conducting of the interviews by an intersex activist created a confidential atmosphere in which intimate and relevant details emerged and also represented a time for the interviewee to explore and analyse her own personal history.

Mental Health Experiences of People with Variations in Sex Characteristics (VSC): Findings from the Being LGBTQI+ study

Thelma Begley, School of Nursing and Midwifery Trinity College Dublin (Ireland); Carmel Downes (School of Nursing and Midwifery Trinity College Dublin (Ireland); Karin O'Sullivan (School of Nursing and Midwifery Trinity College Dublin (Ireland); Jan deVries (School of Nursing and Midwifery Trinity College Dublin (Ireland); Louise Doyle (School of Nursing and Midwifery Trinity College Dublin (Ireland); Mark Monaghan (School of Nursing and Midwifery Trinity College Dublin (Ireland); Brian Keogh (School of Nursing and Midwifery Trinity College Dublin (Ireland); Renee Molloy (Monash University, Melbourne); Matt Kennedy (BeLonGTo); Agnes Higgins (School of Nursing and Midwifery Trinity College Dublin (Ireland)

Abstract

Background: Variations in Sex Characteristics (VSC) are included in many LGBTQI+ studies, but specifics of their mental health often remain elusive. The Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland study developed focussed questions on mental health and wellbeing. Participants who identified as having VSC are the specific focus of this presentation.

Aim: To develop an understanding of the mental health and wellbeing experiences of VSC participants in the Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland Study.

Methodology: A mixed-method online survey using validated scale-based, and open-ended questions was conducted. Responses were analysed specifically to address experiences of people living with VSC. Quantitative analysis used univariate and bivariate statistics while qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis.

Findings: Among the participants in the Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland (n=2,806) thirty-one (n=31) identified as having VSC. Three in five (n=17/28) reported symptoms of severe or extremely severe anxiety, two in five (n=11/28) reported symptoms of severe or extremely severe depression and 29% (n=8/28) reported symptoms of severe or extremely severe stress. Lifetime prevalence rates of self-harm, suicidal thoughts and suicide attempt were 60% (n=16/27), 74% (n=20/27) and 50% (n=13/26) respectively.

Conclusion and Impact: Findings amplify existing knowledge of mental health issues of people with VSC in Ireland. It is anticipated that these findings can increase visibility of people with VSC in mental health services to aid policy and guidance development for health services on the care of people with VSC.

Parallel Session 2

Parallel Session 2.1 – Intersex Rights: Legal, Political, and Cultural Perspectives

14:00 – 15:15
Room E201

Intersex and the Case for Establishing the Law of Enforced Invisibility

Rogena Sterling, University of Waikato & Intersex Aotearoa (Aotearoa New Zealand)

Abstract

Intersex people have existed since time immemorial around the world. There are fragments of history indicating that Indigenous societies not only recognised but also respected intersex people. However, for much of Western history, along with some other societies as well, Intersex persons have been made invisible. The disrespect through the invisibility of Intersex persons has ranged from death to an enforced life as male or female (including through medicalisation more recently). Failure to assimilate as male or female or to switch between has resulted in punishment. The article begins by outlining the law of enforced disappearances. It also indicates the impacts of enforced disappearances on legal personhood and recognition before the law. Deriving from the law of enforced disappearances, the article makes a case for the 'law of enforced invisibility'. As it makes the case, it will use intersexuality as a case in point of why there is a need for such a law through the impact on intersex persons' legal personhood and recognition before the law. Although there are similarities between the proposed law and the law of enforced disappearances, the existing law does not protect what has happened to intersex persons over hundreds of years, along with some other groups. Establishing the law of enforced Invisibility will be a means to protect the legal personhood of populations such as Intersex persons and their recognition before the law.

Self-Determination and Right-wing Populism: Effects on Intersex Policy in Germany

Angelika Von Wahl (Lafayette College)

Abstract

Intersex activists have demanded the self-determination one's own sex for decades. In 2024 Germany passed such a law. However, the self-determination law has opened a political rift in society due to the rise of right-wing populism overshadowing intersex concerns. This paper traces the shift from a relatively supportive discourse towards intersex claims beginning in 2013 to a divisive and antagonistic one in 2023. The paper is based on drafts of the law, comments by intersex activists, and the remarks by politicians from across the political spectrum. The turn in the public debate can be explained by two factors: first, the rise of the anti-gender discourse of the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AFD) and the rightward shift of the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and second, the bundling together of inter-, trans- and non-binary rights in the self-determination law. After more moderate Chancellor Angela Merkel, the CDU is now trying to reclaim conservative voters and is backsliding from a generally supportive human rights discourse to one characterized by outsized concerns over transwomen and ciswomen's safety. The shift is partly a reaction to the bundling together of trans-, non-binary and intersex rights. It is clear that the law, which allows individuals to self-determine their sex without medical evaluation, raises ideological opportunities and cultural opposition that intersex claims alone did not trigger. It invites us to think about the challenges of alliances and the need for more intentional forms of solidarity from the LGBTQ community.

Navigating Body Politics in Shiʿi Legal Tradition: Examining Sayyid Kāẓim al-Yazdī's Account of Non-Binary Intersex

Mehrdad Alipour, Utrecht University (The Netherlands)

Abstract

Traditional Muslim scholars and preachers often portray Islam as intolerant of non-binary sex and gender categories, reinforcing Orientalist perceptions of Islamic teachings. This study challenges such views by examining Shiʿi legal thought and offering a novel exploration of intersex individuals as a distinct ontological category within Shiʿi legal discourse. While few studies have confirmed that intersex individuals may be recognised as a third legal or social category in certain Muslim contexts, hardly any scholarship has demonstrated that Muslim jurists conceptualised intersex individuals as an ontological third category of human beings. Through a textual analysis of the works of the early twentieth-century Shiʿi jurist Sayyid Kāẓim al-Yazdī, I argue that Shiʿi legal thought was not solely concerned with assigning a legal sex but also with uncovering the actual nature of intersex individuals. Shiʿi jurists debated whether intersex individuals were male, female, or constituted a distinct third category. I demonstrate that a significant group of scholars recognised intersex individuals as an ontological category beyond the male-female binary. By rejecting a rigidly binary notion of sex/gender, these jurists created space for intersex individuals to navigate their lives beyond the male-female dichotomy. To illustrate the implications of this approach, I contrast this non-binary legal perspective with binary interpretations in various Islamic legal cases concerning public and private matters, including marriage, clothing, inheritance, and prayer. This analysis highlights the differing legal rights and responsibilities assigned to intersex individuals, providing a historical foundation for contemporary Muslim intersex individuals to advocate for their civil rights within their respective societies.

Parallel Session 2.2 – Intersex Education: Awareness, Inclusion and Training

14:00 – 15:15
Room E203

Variations in Sexual Characteristics and Science and Biology Education

João de Deus de Souza Paiva, Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (Brazil); Êfeh Victório Monteiro Crempe (Federal University of Alfenas, Brazil); Caio César Souza Coelho (Faculdade Atenas de Sete Lagoas, Brazil)

Abstract

Teaching about variations in sexual characteristics in Brazilian science and biology classrooms presents unique challenges. Traditional textbooks often frame these variations as anomalies or problems, perpetuating stigma and hindering open discussions about human diversity. This approach, as highlighted by Silva (2021), can create a hostile learning environment for students who may identify with these variations, leading to feelings of isolation and shame. Furthermore, the lack of adequate teacher training on this topic contributes to the difficulty. Many educators feel unprepared to address these complex issues with sensitivity and accuracy, often relying on outdated or biased information. This lack of preparedness can result in the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes and misinformation. However, there is a growing movement among educators and researchers to advocate for a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to teaching about variations in sexual characteristics. This approach emphasizes the natural diversity of human bodies and experiences, promoting respect and understanding. By moving away from the traditional focus on pathology, educators can create a more welcoming and supportive learning environment for all students. This shift in educational practice requires updated curriculum materials, comprehensive teacher training, and open dialogue about sexuality and gender diversity. By embracing these changes, Brazilian science and biology education can move towards a more inclusive and accurate representation of human biology, fostering a deeper understanding and acceptance of human variation.

Challenging Stigma and Promoting Inclusion: Insights into Swiss Trainee Teachers' Knowledge of and Attitudes Towards Intersex People

Marie-Lou Nussbaum, Bern University of Teacher Education/University of Bern (Switzerland); Peter Hegarty, The Open University (United Kingdom); Sabine Sczesny, University of Bern (Switzerland)

Abstract

Intersex individuals often experience stigma, hate speech, and violence, leading to psychological distress. Schools can be particularly hostile environments for intersex young people, highlighting the need for an inclusive school climate and positive education on intersex-related topics. This study investigated 316 Swiss trainee teachers' knowledge, affective, beh1avioural, and cognitive attitudes, and predictors of these attitudes towards either intersex or trans people. Participants' teaching and training practices, and views on institutional policies were also assessed. Results showed that knowledge of trans issues was significantly higher than knowledge of intersex issues, with 61% of participants reporting no or only moderate knowledge of intersex issues. Attitudes towards intersex people were generally positive, with cognitive attitudes towards intersex people being significantly more positive than towards trans people. Low gender binary beliefs best predicted positive attitudes towards intersex people, meaning that trainee teachers who reported less of a belief in two innate and immutable sexes and genders tended to have more positive attitudes. Trainee teachers also reported limited experience and training on intersex issues, highlighting a systemic oversight in teacher education programmes. These findings therefore underscore the importance of integrating intersex visibility and inclusion into Swiss teacher training curricula. Addressing gender binary beliefs in teacher training can help foster positive attitudes and thereby inclusive and supportive teaching practices. Although teachers may not work in an institutional setting where intersex issues are recognised, their individual attitudes are much more conducive to addressing the challenges of supporting sex and gender diverse pupils than their institutional context suggests.

The awareness of intersex in the SPHE Specification for Junior Cycle in Ireland

Macarena Murugarren Lazzuri, School of Law and Government, Dublin City University (Ireland)

Abstract

This paper examines the awareness of intersex and Variations in Sex Characteristics (VSC) within the 2023 Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curriculum for the Junior Cycle in Ireland.

Introduced in 1994, the RSE curriculum in Ireland is embedded within the Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE) program, which is a mandatory 100-hour short course for students aged 12–16 (McNamara et al., 2011). Following a comprehensive review of RSE in primary and post-primary schools during 2018–19, updated SPHE guidelines were launched in September 2023 (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2023). These revisions emphasize inclusivity, aiming for all students and families to feel represented and for students to appreciate diversity as a fundamental societal value. The curriculum explicitly acknowledges diversity in gender, sexuality, ethnicity, belief systems, social class, and ability/disability (NCCA, 2023).

However, intersex bodies and experiences are often rendered invisible in educational contexts (Jones, 2016; Brömdal et al., 2021; Lundberg et al., 2021; Sterling, 2021). This invisibility perpetuates a lack of understanding and acceptance of bodily diversity, which can expose intersex students to bullying, harassment, and discrimination (Henningham & Jones, 2021; Sterling, 2021; Keating & Lehtonen, 2022). Given the numerous calls to enhance awareness of intersex experiences and VSC in education (Breu, 2009; Jones, 2016; King, 2021; Sterling, 2021; Brömdal et al., 2021), this paper critically analyses the extent to which the updated RSE curriculum and accompanying units of learning address intersex awareness and provide guidance for educators to incorporate intersex topics into their lessons.

Parallel Session 2.3 – Reimagining Intersex Futures: Identity, Time, and Intersectionality

14:00 – 15:15
Room E205

Embodied and Embedded: Applying the 4-E Model of Cognition to Intersex Experiences

Alexander Berezkin, California Institute of Integral Studies (United States of America)

Abstract

How do intersex people experience their identities through their bodies and the systems that shape their lives? What if these experiences could be understood as part of a dynamic embodied cognition and identity formation process?

This presentation introduces the 4-E Model of Cognition (Newen et al., 2018; Stanciu, 2023)—embodied, embedded, enacted, and expanded—as an interdisciplinary framework for studying intersex experiences. The model places the body at the center, recognizing it as the site where cognition and identity are formed and experienced. It also highlights cultural and legal norms as external factors. The element of active participation demonstrates how intersex people interact with their environment, contributing to forming their individual and collective identities. In addition, it shows the importance of support networks and technology as essential components in developing and affirming unique intersex experiences.

Together, these dimensions position the 4-E model as an interpretative tool for understanding the diversity of intersex experiences in addition to current socio-political and life narratives. However, the 4-E model has challenges, including oversimplifying the power dynamics and cultural variability of intersex experiences across socio-political contexts.

This presentation aims to briefly overview the 4-E model's strengths and limitations and offer a practical application through a theoretical interpretation of an autoethnographic case study on the experience of intersex migrant.

Scoping the field of Intersex Studies: Erasures and new possibilities

Surya Monro, Loughborough University (United Kingdom)

Abstract

This paper draws out insights gathered during two European Commission funded research projects (EUCIT and INIA) and the writing of a monograph, all of which were conducted in collaboration with many intersex and endo colleagues. The paper aims to address some of the erasures and omissions in social science knowledge concerning intersex issues, at both conceptual and policy levels. It acknowledges the very substantial body of work that has been carried out to date by intersex scholars and their allies. The paper is written from an endo public sociologist and autoethnographic perspective, which supports justice-oriented research and scholarship.

Whilst the following themes have all been touched upon, and in some cases substantially developed, it can be argued that there is more work to do at conceptual levels in the fields of gender studies, including There is a pressing need for non-anglo research and scholarship to be extended, resourced, and more fully recognised and used within anglo intersex studies. More contributions could be made to feminisms and masculinity studies, and LGBTQ studies, in relation to intersex. A wide range of other fields would also benefit from more input regarding intersex, including the sociology of embodiment, sexuality studies, and family studies. I contend that whilst there is a pressing need to adhere to epistemological justice regarding intersex issues, given the tragic history of extractive research and misrepresentation, a reluctance to integrate intersex studies with other, broader fields of social science knowledge could impoverish both intersex studies and wider academia, inadvertently contributing to further discursive erasures of intersex. There are significant deficits at policy and practice levels also, in areas as disparate as sexual health and organisational studies, which call for urgent attention.

Inter Time: Harnessing Queer & Crip Time to Reimagine Intersex Futures

Tori Dudys (Independent scholar, Canada); Celeste Orr, University of New Brunswick (Canada)

Abstract

How are intersex people caught between the past, present, and future? How do intersex folks challenge normative understandings of time? In considering these questions, we build on the concepts of crip and queer time and propose inter time to explore how intersex people are "out of step with time" (Goltz 2022).

Crip time questions the ableist and sanist conventions of time and queer time stands in opposition to the paradigmatic markers of cisheteronormative timelines. Since intersex people's existence defies able-bodied and cishet time/lines, time/lines that are deeply embedded in white settler colonial logics, inter time helps to fill the gaps that exist between crip and queer time. Inter time exposes the endonormativity inherent in the life course.

The ways that intersex people's body-minds conflict with the normative life course leave them vulnerable to medical violence. The attempt to violently shoehorn intersex people into endo, enabled, cishet, colonial timelines fails: intersex individuals' sense of chronology, past, present, and future are muddled; their ability to thrive in the present and the future are impacted; and some can experience a "paradoxical nostalgia…for all the futures that were lost" (Fisher 2013).

Endo, cishet, enabled, colonial time dictates intersex people do not have a (good) future, so activists and thinkers imagine and create intersex futures by rejecting the normative and reconceptualizing societal constructs. The concept of inter time aims to add to this reconceptualization project, exposing the endonormativity inherent in the life course and creating possibilities that continue the breaking of oppressive temporal boundaries.

Parallel Session 3

Parallel Session 3.1 – Language, Communication, and Counter-Narratives in Intersex Representation

15:45 – 17:15
Room E201

Feedback towards the Nomenclature Change of the intersex

Keiko Irie, The University of Kitakyushu (日本)

Abstract

This paper discusses the history of and the feedback towards the nomenclature change around the "intersex". Since the biggening, the term around intersex has never been steady. It can be said that this was the simple reflection of the confusion of medical society, where they kept failing to "treat" intersex body. Medicine even tries to classify intersex bodies and never succeeds. The name shows and defines how society perceives them. Therefore, it affects the named community and their identity. Intersex movement, such as ISNA, lead to the nomenclature change of intersex and then DSD. On the other hand, it never reflects the intersex community. Now, instead of DSD, and with the term intersex, VSD (Variation of Sex Characteristics) is now being used in the community. How does this happen and what does this mean? To clear this question, this paper traits the nomenclature changes and the history of intersex movements. As a result, it was found that there are various "new" names in the intersex community. These are stories of struggles and rebellion. Rebellion to the medical system and society, which had/has been labeling and marginalizing the intersex body. Naming was the strong statement movement of regaining power and empowerment of the community.

"A Quality of Heart, of Presence, and of Really Caring": Towards Affirmative Intersex Health Communication in Canada

Terese Knoppers, McGill University (Canada); Angelica Voutsinas, University of Toronto (Canada); Nicole Palmour, McGill University (Canada); Kaleb Saulnier, Tri-Agency Institutional Programs Secretariat (Canada); Morgan Holmes, Wilfrid Laurier University (Canada); Marilou Charron, McGill University (Canada); Hortense Gallois, Simon Fraser University (Canada); Narges Jamali, McGill University (Canada); Leslie Ordal, Boise State University (USA); Yann Joly, McGill University (Canada)

Abstract

This qualitative research project aimed to better understand and help improve health communication with intersex adults in Canada by centering the voices of those directly involved and impacted. There is a relative dearth of qualitative literature that centers intersex voices regarding the Canadian context for intersex healthcare. This study contributes to a small but vital and growing body of work that does so. It is also the first to include perspectives both from intersex adults experiencing health communication in Canada and people trained and working in the Canadian healthcare system on what is needed towards affirmative agency-based health communication as the status quo.

The heart of the project was 22 in-depth interviews with intersex adults (14) and healthcare providers (HCPs) from diverse areas of care (8). Our conceptual framework draws from and integrates Crocetti et al.'s (2021) agency-based model of intersex health and social-ecological understandings of health communication. Inductive thematic analysis of interviews produced three interlocking axes for change: HCP skills and approaches, structural access to care, and norms and discourses. Findings offer guidance for HCPs, medical educators, researchers, and policymakers, and are relevant to intersex advocacy efforts in other jurisdictions.

This research culminated in an academic paper and communication guide for HCPs. The authors have backgrounds in intersex advocacy and come to this work from a variety of disciplines, academic and applied. The presentation will discuss the project overall, then focus in on what participants said and asked for regarding health communication and the health care system in Canada.

‘Chinese… what is the best word?’: Impenetrable English vs unintelligible translations in Hong Kong hospitals

Brian King, University of Hong Kong (Hong Kong)

Abstract

Multilingual contexts can bring clashes between norms of social interaction on the one hand versus the norms of [parent]patient-centred medicine on the other, and it is important to explore how it affects the lived experience of people with intersex traits and their families. The data for analysis have been selected from two sources – research interviews with doctors in Hong Kong who work closely with intersex children and their parents, and a subsequent conversation with local intersex activist and doctor of Chinese medicine, Small Luk. Discourse analysis of the audio-recorded interviews, following the principles of interactional sociolinguistics, serves to reveal struggles with the globally circulating yet locally interpreted terminology that is available in English, Cantonese, and Mandarin. The doctors' accounts relate interactional difficulty with crossing the boundary between medical English (the language of their medical education) and Cantonese (their mother-tongue) when speaking to Chinese parents about their child's variations in innate sex characteristics. When attempting to translate technical English terms into Cantonese, doctors find their command of biomedical Cantonese lacking and problematic, with their efforts at translation often causing parents to become upset or withdrawn due to anxiety and embarrassment. In response, the doctors claim to simply keep the terms in English or avoid them altogether. The talk finishes with Small Luk's response to the analysis presented, in which she laments the pervasiveness of this problem and how both strategies (non-translation and avoidance) potentially exacerbate the lived intensity of the parents' experience, leading to drastic decision-making on behalf of the child.

Constructing counternarratives? Reviewing discourses on intersex joy, happiness, and celebration

Amets Suess-Schwend, Andalusian School of Public Health & University of Granada (Spain)

Abstract

Over the last decades, intersex studies, activism, and arts have widely focused on the human rights violations intersex people are exposed to, denouncing surgical interventions and other unconsented treatments on intersex newborns, children and adolescents and defending the right to bodily integrity and autonomy, among other demands. More recently, discourses, representations, and strategies on intersex joy, happiness, and celebration have emerged, raising the question about their role in intersex studies, activism, and arts.

The presentation is based on a narrative literature review on intersex epistemologies, methodologies, ethics, and representations developed over the last decade as a work-in-progress project, a scoping review on intersex epistemologies conducted in 2022, and a narrative literature review of epistemological reflections and representations in trans, crip, deaf, and mad studies, activism, and arts.

The presentation aims at exploring discourses, representations and strategies on joy, happiness, and celebration in intersex studies, activism, and arts, focusing on the following questions: How do discourses, representations, and strategies on intersex joy, happiness, and celebration counter dynamics of pathologization and human rights violations? Are there potential contradictions, misinterpretations, or risks? Which role have audiovisual and artistic formats? How are these discourses related to human rights-based demands, depathologization perspectives, and reflections on epistemic (in)justice? How do these narratives relate to discourses and representations of joy, happiness, and celebration in other knowledge fields that question current clinical practices, such as trans, crip, deaf, and mad studies, activism, and arts?

Parallel Session 3.2 – Critical Historical Perspectives on Intersex

15:45 – 17:15
Room E203

Hermaphrodites and Gender Classification in Roman Law: Ulpian's Contribution to Legal Identity

Giuseppe Di Donato, Edinburgh Napier University (United Kingdom)

Abstract

My presentation analyses D. 1.5.10, a legal fragment written by the Roman jurist Ulpian (2nd-3rd centuries AD). In this passage, Ulpian answers the question "To whom do we equate the hermaphrodite?" (hermaphroditum cui comparamus?), stating that they should be considered as belonging to the sex that prevails in them (eius sexus aestimandum, qui in eo praeualet).

The passage raises key issues. Firstly, it suggests that the question had already been debated ('quaeritur': "It arises the question"), and that, apparently, there was no specific provision on the matter. Otherwise, Ulpian would have referred to it, as he did with other legal rules. Secondly, his use of 'puto' (I deem) indicates that dissenting opinions existed. Finally, the criterion Ulpian proposes (determining the prevailing sex) appears vague, as he does not explain what it means for a "sex to prevail".

Ulpian seems to attempt to establish an objective approach (the sex that 'objectively' prevails), rather than a subjective one (for instance, the hermaphrodite's own views and feelings); yet, ultimately, this approach reinforces a strict binary framework.

It must be noted that Ulpian's reasoning is not merely antiquarian: Justinian's Digest shaped European legal traditions, influencing national codes worldwide, and its binary view of gender continues to inform the classification of intersex individuals. Moreover, even today, legal recognition of sex remains an institutional fact, assigned at birth based on medical evaluation.

Reflecting on the historical roots of this reasoning allows for a critical reassessment of how legal systems classify gender to-day.

The impact of surgeon Lennox Ross Broster on intersex care in 1930s and '40s Britain, and its continued legacy today

Clare Tebbutt (Ireland)

Abstract

This presentation will consider the influence of the surgeon and endocrinologist Lennox Ross Broster (1889-1965) in shaping narratives around intersex that persist today. Broster positioned himself as an expert on intersexuality and saw many patients at London's Charing Cross Hospital and at his private practice on London's exclusive Harley Street. His 1938 book The Adrenal Cortex and Intersexuality contained almost a hundred case studies but has received relatively little attention. My concern here is not with Broster as a producer of medical knowledge, but with the possibilities opened up by the publicity given to his work, and by the circulation of knowledge prompted by his own penchant for self-publicity. How was intersex care being portrayed in popular culture in the 1930s and 1940s as a result of Broster's relative fame? What traces do Broster's case studies provide us of the intersex people who were encountering Broster? In the instance of Broster's most famous patient – the former athlete Mark Weston – how does Broster's case study of Weston, with its use of sport as a diagnostic tool, resonate with current discussions round intersex inclusion in sport?

Disorders and Identities: Clinical Sex and Gender in Britain in 1969

David Griffiths, University of Surrey (United Kingdom)

Abstract

1969 was an important year in Britain for the vexed boundary work between sex, gender and sexuality. Specifically, two events of key importance to the development of clinical and social understandings of sex and gender occurred in this year: the publication of The Intersexual Disorders by Dewhurst and Gordon, and the First International Symposium on Gender Identity in London. The Intersexual Disorders (1969) framed variations of sex characteristics as biological issues, but ones with necessarily negative social and psychological consequences, influenced by

US clinical practices associated with John Money. The symposium, on the other hand, was an attempt to frame gender as separate from biological sex, while at the same time consolidating clinical authority over issues of gender. While the book was supposed to focus on intersex and the biological, gender issues haunt the content. While the symposium was supposed to focus on gender identity, there was an almost constant slippage to discussion of the biological, and of intersex variations. In this paper, I will introduce these two events, and draw attention to the fact that they both represent boundary work between concepts of sex, gender and sexuality, but also between the biological, the psychological and the social. I will argue that these events deserve attention, as they both have ongoing effects on British and international clinical and social approaches to sex, gender and sexuality, including healthcare protocols for intersex and transgender individuals.

The Enlightenment and the Fantasy of Sexual Binarism

Perrine Gaudry, Emory University (United States of America)

Abstract

During the 18th century, individuals identified as hermaphrodites faced legal prohibitions against marriage and procreation, as the law struggled to categorize and grant rights to them. The prevailing "scientific" response was to classify hermaphrodites as pseudo-hermaphrodites, treating their condition as a superficial illusion to be corrected through scientific investigation. The Encyclopédie echoed this sentiment, portraying hermaphroditism as a fantastical construct rather than a natural occurrence. However, deeper analysis of these early "positivist" documents—such as the Encyclopédie's Hermaphrodite article, its supplement, and illustrative plates—reveals underlying challenges to the rigid binary notion of dimorphism, which posits only two biological sexes.

This study employs textual and visual analysis of these materials, situating them within broader legal, scientific, and cultural debates of the Enlightenment. Applying insights from queer theory and intersex studies, it highlights the ambivalences within these texts, showing that the supposed universality of dimorphism was already being questioned. By uncovering cracks in the binary framework of biological sex, this research challenges the reductive view of the Enlightenment as exclusively endorsing binary thinking. Ultimately, the study deepens historical understanding and contributes to contemporary intersex studies by illuminating the historical fragility of binary notions of sex and gender.

Parallel Session 3.3 – Global Intersex Activism: Strategies for Change

15:45 – 17:15
Room E205

The State of Intersex Organizing

Erin Vlahović (Astrea Foundation) as presenter
Julia Lukomnik, VAPA Consulting (Netherlands); Somjen Frazer, Strength in Numbers Consulting Group (USA); Mauro Cabral Grinspan, Global Philanthropy Project (Belgium); Ezra Nepon, Global Philanthropy Project (USA)

Abstract

The third edition of the State of Intersex Organizing report, published in October 2024, was produced by the Global Philanthropy Project in collaboration with key stakeholder partners, including the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice. This analysis captures the current landscape of the global intersex movement, highlighting its rapid growth alongside significant challenges. Based on data from 151 intersex organizations across diverse regions, the report provides critical insights into organizational priorities, activities, funding patterns, and systemic barriers faced by the movement.

Intersex organizations worldwide are at the forefront of advocating for bodily autonomy and human rights, particularly in opposing non-consensual, medically unnecessary interventions on intersex children. Despite these vital efforts, the movement remains chronically underfunded; approximately 60% of intersex organizations operate on annual budgets below $20,000, and 13% have no budget at all. Compounding these financial constraints, activists face widespread threats, including physical violence, opposition-driven hostility, and pervasive burnout.

Despite these barriers, the intersex movement has made significant progress, from shaping international human rights policies to achieving higher levels of formalization, with 71% of organizations now government-registered. However, without expanded funding and capacity-strengthening initiatives, the sustainability of these achievements is at risk.

This report calls for multiyear, unrestricted funding and emphasizes fostering diverse, flexible support systems to build resilient movements. It serves as an urgent call to action for donors, governments, and civil society to recognize and empower intersex-led organizing. Investing in this movement is essential to advancing the human rights and well-being of intersex individuals globally.

The context and goals of the Australian intersex movement

Morgan Carpenter, Sydney Health Ethics, University of Sydney School of Public Health (Australia)

Abstract

Australia has some of the oldest and largest intersex organisations, with a hospital-based AIS Support Group becoming established in the 1980s, and a national organisation engaging in both advocacy and delivery of psychosocial support services. Despite this, the legal and social context remains challenging. Long associations with LGBT populations act both to facilitate access to policy-makers and inhibit it. Public comprehension remains poor, in ways that have proven consequential. Clinical practices have become the subject of national and local inquiries, but still persist unimpeded in most jurisdictions. The country's federal system is often maligned as complex and wasteful, yet it has also offered opportunities for progress. These include legislative protections from harmful practices in medical settings, and establishment of a hospital psychosocial support service – so far in a single jurisdiction. Can any lessons be drawn from this experience? Does the Australian experience have anything to offer other regions?

Advancing Intersex Rights and Awareness in Congo: The Role of GIDE in Societal Change

Ginette Ntumbi, GIDE (Congo-Kinshasa)

Abstract

Dr. Ginette Ntumbi Tukelebawu, a general practitioner and intersex activist from Congo Kinshasa, leads Groupe Inter désirs (GIDE), a non-profit organization championing the rights and bodily integrity of intersex individuals. This abstract examines GIDE's strategic approaches to fostering acceptance and understanding of intersex people in Congolese society.

GIDE's comprehensive awareness campaigns engage a wide range of societal stakeholders, including health professionals, educators, and local NGOs, to challenge misconceptions and create an inclusive environment. GIDE will work with the University of Kinshasa through its rare diseases center which is already working on DSD in order to review theories and practices. A significant partnership with the Astraea Foundation has broadened these efforts, enhancing community engagement and support and enabling the identification of the region's first wave of intersex individuals.

GIDE collaborates with major institutions like the National Human Rights Commission and Ministries of Human Rights, Gender-Family, National Education, and Health to secure legal protections and develop respectful healthcare policies for intersex individuals.

Additionally, GIDE advocates for a multidisciplinary center providing holistic care for intersex people, aiming to establish a supportive environment free from fear for intersex individuals and their families.

This presentation will highlight GIDE's role in transforming societal attitudes and legal frameworks in Congo, underscoring the global significance of local activism. It will also discuss how intersex activism is influenced by cultural settings, providing an African perspective on the unique challenges and cultural factors involved.

Medical violence, the need to change, and intersex activists disrupting

Mir Abe Marinus, NNID – Expertise centre for sex diversity (Netherlands)

Abstract

Several studies showed the detrimental impact of medically unnecessary treatments on intersex children performed without informed consent on their mental health (Davis, 2015; Hart & Shakespeare-Finch, 2022). Even though human rights bodies call to stop these treatments, they continue to take place, including in the Netherlands. Two recent qualitative studies in the Netherlands showed several participants experiencing these practices as violence, rape or assault (Marinus & Cense, 2024; Myren & Marinus, forthcoming).

In this paper, results from both studies will be analyzed in conjunction with a recent Dutch documentary “Kiezen, snijden, zwijgen” (2024, English transl.: “Choosing, cutting, silencing”), which follows the story of two intersex persons, Sharan and Marieke, dealing with the aftermath of such medical treatments. The analysis of the two qualitative studies will focus on the factors producing these treatments as violent, including a lack of physical integrity and self-determination and recommended or upheld secrecy around the diagnosis and treatments. A qualitative analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) will be combined with a phenomenological approach, drawing from Merleau-Ponty (1968, 1981, 2004), Ahmed (2006, 2014) and Massumi (2015). Analyzing the documentary through the notion of “an archive of feelings” (Cvetkovich, 2003) allows us to perceive the documentary and practices around it as sites of anger, depression and hope but also of disruption and reordering.

With this analysis, this presentation will both show the desperate need for intersex healthcare in the Netherlands to change, and how intersex people, despite these challenges, find ways to (re)orientate themselves and change their environment.

Common as Red Hair

Presentation of the short film *Common As Red Hair*.

Moderated by **Kimberly Zieselman, JD** (she/her), an intersex woman and Senior Advisor for Global Intersex Rights at Outright International, where she focuses on advancing the human rights of intersex people using various advocacy tools, including legal policy and awareness raising. Kimberly also served as Senior Advisor to the Special Envoy to Advance the Human Rights of LGBTQI+ Persons in the U.S. State Department. She was Executive Director of interACT: *Advocates for Intersex Youth* and served on the board of InterConnect, a support group for intersex people and their families. In 2015, Kimberly was the sole American intersex participant in the historic Expert Intersex Convening by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and is an official signatory to the Yogyakarta Principles +10, a milestone international human rights guidance document for LGBTQIA+. Previously, she was Director of Government Relations for Boston Children's Hospital and earned the National Association of Children's Hospitals Legislative Advocacy Award after leading the hospital's first strategy-driven government relations campaign, raising over $200 million in new Medicaid funding.

Kimberly is passionate about using authentic storytelling to change hearts and minds and create change. In 2020, Kimberly published *XOXY*, an award-winning memoir about her personal and professional intersex journey, and recently executive produced the award-winning short intersex film *Common As Red Hair*. Kimberly regularly consults on intersex policies and intersex representation in the media. She has been quoted and/or published in outlets including USA Today, New York Times, Washington Post, Washington Blade, BBC, CNN, and The Advocate. Kimberly has a JD from Suffolk University Law School and a BA in Communications and Political Science from the University of Vermont.

UNNATURALLY WOMAN

Art exhibition by Mel Kurutta, displayed during the two days of the main conference.

Mel, in art Kurutta, is an intersex visual artist and activist. Born and raised in Italy, she has a background in graphic design studies. Her art reflects her experience as an intersex, lesbian and disabled person: it is often an impulsive outburst, conditioned by systemic oppressions, mostly experienced in medical and social settings. Her art is unfiltered, uncensored, to freely express her pain and anger.
Since 2020, she has been particularly dedicated to advocating for the human rights of intersex people through social awareness and peer support. Mel was a member of InterseXioni for 4 years, as part of the Executive Board and the Intersex Youth Group. She made history by speaking publicly about intersex rights for the first time at several Prides in her area. She's part of Forum VCS, a strategic network that aims to advance intersex human rights in Italy.
Mel Kurutta has also participated in various art projects, including three editions of YOUth&I - An Intersex Youth Anthology, and her art has been exhibited at Sydney World Pride (Australia, 2023) and Tempio Del Futuro Perduto (Milan, 2024). She's currently promoting her first solo exhibition 'UNNATURALLY WOMAN: Existence and Resistance of an Intersex Body' in Italy and abroad.

ALWAYS ANTIFASCIST.

https://linktr.ee/melkurutta

Book launch

Launch of the book *Intersex, Variations of Sex Characteristics, DSD: Critical Approaches*, with co-editors Surya Monro, Adeline Berry, Morgan Carpenter, Daniela Crocetti, Sean Saifa Wall.

Description

People with variations of sex characteristics (VSC) are born with chromosomal, gonadal, and/or anatomical diversities that do not fit the typical definition of male or female. This book develops a social science of VSC, Intersex, and Disorders of Sex Development (DSD).

Issues of bodily autonomy, sex, gender, and sexuality are highly topical. Yet, little is heard about people with VSCs, or the unique issues they face. This book is a collaborative project between intersex and endosex (nonintersex) authors that gives uninitiated readers a way into the complex debates surrounding IVSC. It breaks new ground theoretically whilst also presenting novel empirical material from a range of international sources. Issues of power, discrimination, identity, and agency are key to understanding the current situation for people with VSCs.

Bridging between intersex studies, medical literatures, and broader social science debates, this text will be of interest to those working in practice and policy positions, as well as students and scholars across a range of disciplines, especially those studying social inequality, embodiment, healthcare, sex and gender, LGBTQ+ issues, disability, globalisation, and political change.

Credits: Marta Prandelli

DAY 2 - 10 JUNE 2025

Keynote 2 – Professor Katrina Roen

Psychosocial approaches, decolonising knowledges: critical perspectives on intersex research and healthcare

Professor Katrina Roen University of Waikato, Aotearoa New Zealand) takes a queer, feminist and critical psychology approach to intersex research. They have carried out research in the UK and Scandinavia (the SENS project), seeking to build psychosocial understandings into healthcare for people with variations in sex characteristics. Katrina is a founding member of Psychosocial Studies Intersex –International (PSI-I). Since returning to Aotearoa New Zealand, Katrina has turned their attention to the construction of intersex in settler colonial contexts. Katrina's other research has addressed topics such as queer youth self-harm, trans embodiment and digital affect.

Webpage: https://profiles.waikato.ac.nz/katrina.roen

Parallel Session 4

Parallel Session 4.1 – Caregiving, Disclosure, and Family Dynamics in Intersex Healthcare

10:00 – 11:15
Room E201

Project LISTEN: Foundations and Preliminary Development of a Peer Empowerment Program for Caregivers of Children with Variations of Sex Characteristics

Bonnie Scranton, University of Pennsylvania (United States of America)

Abstract

Poor societal understanding of diverse human sex development contributes to stigma and low degrees of self-empowerment for caregivers of children with VSC which may result in an over-reliance on medicalized interventions. Community-based intentional peer support may improve the lives of children with VSC through increasing caregiver knowledge, fostering social connections, and augmenting communication and advocacy skills. Using principles of co-design grounded in notions of epistemic justice and liberation health social work, this project aims to address the current lack of evidence-based, accessible, and sustained psychosocial support and education for caregivers of children with VSC in the United States.

Inspired by an Intervention Mapping (IM) approach to health promotion program development, Project LISTEN (Let Intersex Stories Teach, Enlighten, and Nurture) created a preliminary blueprint for a psychosocial empowerment intervention for caregivers of children with VSC. A Community Council collaboratively completed six IM steps: (1) needs assessment and logic model, (2) program objectives, (3) program design, (5) implementation planning, and (6) evaluation planning. Step 4, program production, was outlined for future piloting.

Findings highlight the need for programming aimed at reducing caregiver isolation, building advocacy skills, and increasing content knowledge of VSC. Empowered and educated caregivers can better communicate with medical professionals, safeguard their children's authenticity, and experience personal growth.

This project underscores the importance of community wisdom in inclusive research to ensure ethically designed interventions and demonstrates the alignment of clinical social work principles with efforts promoting epistemic justice for caregivers toward better outcomes for children with VSC.

Interrogating Parental Perspectives on Early Disclosure and Diagnosis of Variations of Sex Characteristics in Ireland

Somya Dixit, Dublin City University (Ireland)

Abstract

Intersex children often undergo medical interventions before they can give consent to such interventions, with decisions typically made by doctors in consultation with parents. However, parents frequently lack awareness of intersex variations and the long-term implications of such treatments (Behrens, 2020). Family responses to the birth of an intersex child and the decisions they make about these medical interventions vary depending on how the birth is dealt with by healthcare professionals (Aegerter et al., 2023). Despite this, no universal medical or surgical treatment protocol exists to guide healthcare professionals in supporting intersex individuals and their families (Ní Mhuirthile, 2021).

Interviews with parents of intersex children in Ireland reveal that these early interactions significantly shape parental perspectives and decisions. Some parents encountered stigmatising attitudes from healthcare providers, perpetuating societal stigma and influencing their choices. In contrast, others who engaged with intersex activists or conducted prior research demonstrated a more informed and supportive approach toward their child's intersex traits.

Using Martin Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology and Hans-Georg Gadamer's legal hermeneutics, this paper explores the meanings parents give to their early experiences and their impact on family approaches toward their intersex child. By unpacking and understanding the meanings given to these experiences, the researcher seeks to examine the challenges families face upon the birth of an intersex child and recommend legal reforms to safeguard intersex children's rights to bodily integrity and physical autonomy, aiming to foster more inclusive and supportive practices in healthcare and beyond.

Enhancing intersex healthcare in genetics: Recognizing the family as a collective unit

Kayla Horowitz, Cliniques Universitaires Saint Luc (Belgium)

Abstract

People with variations of sex characteristics (VSCs) have long faced medical secrecy, injustice, and stigma. Historically, the management of VSCs has aimed to 'normalize' intersex variations through 'gender assignment' surgeries, often performed before the individual can meaningfully participate in consent and decision-making. Growing intersex advocacy and scholarship have highlighted intersex experiences, prompting a shift in VSC care toward prioritizing autonomy. In parallel, genetic factors' contribution to the development of VSCs are increasingly recognized. Genetics professionals can help promote an understanding of VSCs for families as well as any potential treatment based on medical conditions that co-occur with some VSCs. Nonetheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that misuses of genetic knowledge have contributed to the pathologization of the intersex community. To this day, genetic investigations can be pursued under the guise of resolving a 'social emergency' to identify an individual's 'true sex,' further justifying non-essential surgeries. In addition, while parents may consent to their child's genetic investigations with the aim of understanding the VSC's implications, individuals with VSCs may have diverging priorities as they mature, including prioritizing their autonomy in healthcare decision-making. Further, genetic investigations can have implications that extend beyond the individual or their immediate family unit, impacting family relationships and communication more broadly (PMID: 38627912). This talk will explore how achieving "diagnostic clarity" through genetic insights can transform family dynamics and decision-making, while emphasizing the need for nuanced and ethical counseling that respects individual's autonomy within their collective familial contexts.

Parallel Session 4.2 – Intersex Wellbeing through Medical, Societal, and Cultural Perspectives

10:00 – 11:15
Room E203

A scoping study for PhD proposal examining available literature on gender incongruence in individuals with intersex variations and societal perception of them across different cultures.

Lexi Breen, University of Lincoln / Interconnected UK (United Kingdom)

Abstract

This Study aims to explore the relationship between intersex variations and the incidence and effect on gender identity, Incongruence, dysphoria and/or gender euphoria on individuals.

This study will cross multiple themes, intersectional identities of sex, gender and disability, international perspectives including cultural acceptance and stigmatisation, impacts of overcoming prejudice and discrimination and negotiating invisibility and visibility where intersex individuals often encounter marginalisation and, in some cases, subjected to non-consensual medical interventions.

The primary study will be conducted using an anonymous online survey, to capture participants who are geographically spread, with the option of joining a further study utilising an online interview collecting both quantitative data using the Utrecht Gender Dysphoria Scale – Gender Spectrum and Qualitative responses through free text answers and optional follow up interviews.

Further the study will examine how intersex variations may influence the development of gender identity. It will seek to explore the complex interplay between what determines biological sex and gender identity in intersex individuals including atypical chromosomes, anatomy and hormonal differences.

The study also seeks to explore what the approaches and challenges in providing appropriate care are and if precedents exist to bypass the GIC route for hormonal interventions which align to gender identity whilst supporting metabolic function, surgical options, and psychological support.

As this study looks at a wide range of perspectives it will contribute to a better understanding of the intersectionality between intersex variations and gender identity which is important to all and will inform future research and clinical practice in this area.

Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia: Medical Care, Intersex Body Variations and Life Experiences collected by Brújula Intersexual

Eva Alcántara, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Xochimilco (México); Brújula Intersexual (México); Carlos Narváez-Pichardo, Hospital General Xoco and Brújula Intersexual (México); Frida Flores, University of Calgary and Brújula Intersexual (México); Teresa Ávalos, Brújula Intersexual (México); Laura Inter, Brújula Intersexual (México)

Abstract

The corporeality associated with Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia (CAH) poses significant challenges to the traditional dichotomous model of sex. Historically categorized within intersex variations, there is currently a movement to reclassify CAH as a distinct medical condition. This paper analyzes the evolving discourse around CAH and its implications for clinical practices. Employing qualitative methodology, we engaged directly with individuals diagnosed with CAH in Mexico through the Brújula Intersexual project. As a common diagnosis included in mandatory newborn screening, CAH affects many lives across the country. Our findings suggest that CAH should remain recognized within the broader spectrum of intersex variations, given its complex clinical manifestations and their profound effects on individuals' lived experiences. We identified common barriers faced by individuals with CAH in Latin America, including shortages in medical resources and societal discrimination regarding their bodily differences. We conclude that (1) the reconfiguration of CAH in medical discourse must consider both biological factors and the reality of intersex experiences to provide adequate care; and (2) to ensure individuals with CAH receive appropriate medical and social support, comprehensive public policies must be developed to address the challenges these communities face in Latin America. This approach aims to foster greater sensitivity in CAH care by confronting the biases associated with endo-cis-heteronormativity.

Navigating Social, Cultural and Policy Differences: Advancing Intersex Awareness through the CHRISALIS Project

Marta Prandelli (Dublin City University)

Abstract

The CHRISALIS project examines how socio-cultural, legal, and ethical factors shape intersex experiences, with a focus on legal and cultural contexts in advancing intersex awareness. People with variations in sex characteristics (VSC) are often unseen due to societal norms reinforcing binary gender frameworks, facing unique challenges in medical, legal, and social environments. This research explores how intersex issues are framed in public discourse, the impact of legal frameworks on awareness, and the role of social awareness in shaping intersex support systems.

Using qualitative methods—including media analysis, interviews, and focus groups with stakeholders from medical, social, and political fields—the project compares how intersex issues are approached in different cultural settings. Initial findings reveal some differences between countries. In Ireland, recent advancements in LGBT+ rights have fostered a more structured approach to intersex policies, whereas in Italy, a fragmented and conservative stance on LGBT+ issues presents challenges for unified advocacy. Intersex is often framed either as a medical issue, limiting recognition of intersex as a human rights concern, or as part of the broader LGBT+ agenda, sometimes overshadowing the specific demands of the intersex community.

Additionally, intersex movements face significant barriers, including a lack of specialised expertise, financial support, and institutional recognition. Advocacy efforts rely heavily on a small number of dedicated activists, often working with limited resources. This project underscores the importance of culturally and legally informed policies that reflect the diverse lived experiences of intersex individuals, ensuring they are inclusive, responsive, and grounded in human rights.

Parallel Session 4.3 – Advancing Intersex Healthcare: Collaboration, Education, and Inclusion

10:00 – 11:15
Room E205

ilink.net.au: Intersex health, rights, sexual health and wellness resources

Bonnie Hart, InterLink, InterAction for Health and Human Rights (Australia); Gabriel Filpi, InterAction for Health and Human Rights (Australia)

Abstract

ilink.net.au is a new intersex information hub providing depathologised, trauma-informed resources on physical, mental and sexual health, patient rights and sexual violence prevention for people with innate variations of sex characteristics (IVSC). The website supports InterLink, a pioneering Australian peer-led community-based psychosocial service addressing the health disparity and stigma facing the IVSC community in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand.

People with IVSC risk and experience profound stigmatisation and patholgisation that can result in poor physical, mental and sexual health outcomes through simultaneously experiencing unnecessary medical interventions earlier in life and being unable to access knowledgeable services as adults. Despite sometimes having complex health needs, people with IVSC often have poor knowledge of their own bodies and struggle to access, or stay connect to, affirmative health services that are knowledgeable and respect their rights, values, and preferences. IVSC health and wellbeing information and resources have previously been highly medicalised or conflate intersex issues with other populations'.

ilink.net.au features depathologised information on specific intersex variations' aetiology, treatment options and human rights risks. Patient rights tool kits cover important IVSC topics such as rights in health settings, informed consent, bodily autonomy, and disclosure. Practical tools for vaginal dilation, boundary setting, sex and sexuality support IVSC-specific sexual violence prevention resources. The website acts as a referral point for InterLink's tailored psychosocial support and integrated care coordination.

This session will present the many tools ilink.net.au offers to people with IVSC and practitioners working with clients with IVSC whilst identifying how the new resources address existing information gaps.

Addressing healthcare challenges for intersex people in Italy: a multidisciplinary approach through the institutional website "InfoIntersex", training programs, and population analysis

Matteo Marconi, Reference Centre for Gender Medicine, Istituto Superiore di Sanità (Italy); Marta De Santis, National Centre for Rare Diseases, Istituto Superiore di Sanità (Italy); Angela Ruocco, Reference Centre for Gender Medicine, Istituto Superiore di Sanità (Italy); Martina Manoli, Reference Centre for Gender Medicine, Istituto Superiore di Sanità (Italy); Alessandra D, Fisher. Andrology, Women's Endocrinology and Gender Incongruence Unit, Florence University Hospital (Italy); Jiska Ristori, Andrology, Women's Endocrinology and Gender Incongruence Unit, Florence University Hospital (Italy); Cristina Meriggiola, Division of Gynecology and Human Reproduction Physiopatology, IRCCS Azienda Ospedaliero-Universitaria di Bologna (Italy); Anna Lorenzetti, Department of Law, University of Bergamo (Italy); Lucia Busatta, Department of Cellular, Computational and Integrative Biology – CIBIO, University of Trento (Italy); Elena Ortona, Reference Centre for Gender Medicine, Istituto Superiore di Sanità (Italy); Marina Pierdominici, Reference Centre for Gender Medicine, Istituto Superiore di Sanità (Italy)

Abstract

Access to appropriate healthcare remains a significant challenge for intersex people and their families, partly due to the lack of independent, certified, and up-to-date information on healthcare and legal issues. This difficulty is compounded by insufficient training for healthcare professionals regarding variations of sex characteristics (VSC). To address these critical gaps, the Reference Centre for Gender Medicine at the National Institute of Health in Italy, in collaboration with the National Office against Racial Discrimination, implemented a project under the National Operational Program for Social Inclusion (European Social Fund 2014–2020). A key milestone of this initiative was the launch of the institutional website "InfoIntersex" in June 2023. Developed in collaboration with intersex organizations, healthcare experts, and legal professionals, this platform provides information on VSC, psychological and medical support, and underscores the significance of a multidisciplinary approach. It includes an interactive map of public healthcare facilities specializing in intersex-specific care, legal resources, and sections aimed at debunking myths and promoting best practices for professionals. The project also introduced an accredited online training course, attracting nearly 10,000 participants and highlighting the demand for education on intersex health. Additionally, a study using data from the National Rare Disease Registry and hospital discharge records (2001–2021) estimated the intersex population in Italy at 9,440 cases. These findings underscore the urgent need for targeted training, better data collection, and inclusive policies to ensure equitable healthcare access for intersex individuals in Italy.

The promise of collaboration: what "inclusive" medical consultation and research means for intersex social actors

Janik Bastien Charlebois, Université du Québec à Montréal (Canada)

Abstract

Medical professionals involved in management of innate variations of sex characteristics (IVSC) praise collaboration with "concerned individuals" or intersex organizations. Some acknowledge intersex expertise and others claim that consultation and research initiatives are inclusive or participatory in nature (I-DSD Congress 2013; Sandberg, Calles und Wisniewski, 2015; Cools et al. 2018, 2024). They oppose this collaborative ideal to intersex legislative efforts aiming at protecting children with IVSC (Vilain et al., 2007; Sandberg, Calles und Wisniewski, 2015; Lee und Houk, 2010; Sandberg und Vilain, 2022; Cools et al. 2024). They claim that collaboration attracts greater support than human-rights based activism and builds coalitions that are more representative (Cools et al., 2016, 2018, 2024).

Do consultation and research initiatives presented as inclusive treat intersex individuals as equals capable of expert knowledge? Mobilizing Iris Marion Young's (2000) concept of internal exclusion and Fricker's (2007) theorizing of epistemic injustice, I analyse initiatives presented as collaborations. I focus foremost on the 2013 I-DSD Congress Meet the Experts: A Joint Effort panel, the DSD-TRN Improving Health for People living with DSD research project (United States, 2011-), as well as the European COST Action BM1303 A systematic elucidation of differences of sex development (DSDnet) research (2013-2018). Examining a range of material produced around these initiatives, I evaluate quantitative and qualitative participation, as well as treatment of participating intersex voices. Results indicate an undervaluation of intersex knowledge and relevance as social actors. Discrepancy between discourse on collaboration and practice indicates an attempt at maintaining medical control over intersex management.

Parallel Session 5

Parallel Session 5.1 – Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare for Intersex People: Needs, Challenges, and Support

11:45 – 13:15
Room E201

Sexual Healthcare Needs of People with Sex Variation

Julia Bailey, University College London (England); Jiazhi Luo, ex UCL (England)

Abstract

People with differences in sex development face medicalization, discrimination, and lack of tailored healthcare. There are often unmet needs for advice and support concerning fertility and sexual wellbeing. This study summarises evidence on the sexual and reproductive healthcare needs of people with sex variation, offering recommendations for healthcare providers.

Methods: Systematic search of 5 databases (OVID Medline, EMBASE, PsycINFO, ProQuest, Web of Science) for evidence regarding the sexual and reproductive healthcare needs of people with sex variation. Articles were screened, data extracted and coded, and themes synthesised narratively.

Findings: 21 studies were included. Studies described the challenges that people with sex variation can face in sexual self-perception, forming sexual relationships, arousal and sexual satisfaction. There is a lack of long-term support from healthcare providers who do not have appropriate knowledge and expertise. There is too little appropriately timed information on fertility and sexual function for people with sex variation, repeated genital examinations, and inadequate informed consent for treatment decisions.

Recommendations/conclusion

- Patient-centered, trauma informed, long-term physical and psychological sexual healthcare is needed for people with differences of sex development
- Healthcare providers need comprehensive education and training about sexual healthcare for people with sex variation
- Policies are needed to protect people with differences of sex development from medicalization and discrimination

Amplifying the 'I' in 'Reproductive Justice' – arguments for intersex liberation and demedicalisation in abortion activism, reproductive care and scholarship.

Toni Kania, Edinburgh Napier University & Queer May Association (Scotland; Poland)

Abstract

While abortion is (un)practiced and (mis)understood differently across cultures, communities and states, majority of the Western-centric public and biomedical discourses are focused on the wellbeing of a foetus, as well as theoretical disputes on the boundaries of humanity, leaving pregnant people – especially who they are and what they want – behind. The latter issue is exemplified by intersex people whose bodies, reproductivity and identities continue to be Othered and subjected to nonconsensual interventions.

Reproductive justice is a critical framework created by Black feminists in the 1990s and is currently a leading idea in mutual aid groups across the world. Intersex voices are often, however, excluded from mainstream abortion debates, or their experiences placed under the umbrella category of 'gender diversity' without recognising their distinct perspectives and needs. Intersex self-advocates were long highlighting the colonial and ableist roots of Western-medical practices - being forced to abort or denied abortion due to oppressive sex- and gender-binary norms, followed by prenatal screening for intersex traits, and 'treatment' of such characteristics. I argue that demedicalisation and reproductive justice for intersex people cannot happen without first acknowledging these eugenic foundations, and then dismantling the system of medical oppression to decolonise abortion and reproduction.

Based on a literature review and experiences as an active member of international abortion mutual aid networks, my presentation will focus on highlighting the importance of the intersex perspective on reproductive justice, as well as reflecting on the question of what trans*/gender-diverse/gender-expansive lenses can offer to intersex people fighting for liberating abortion.

Parenting Journeys of Intersex and VSC Individuals

Daniela Crocetti, Bar-Ilan University (Israel/Italy), Limor Meoded Danon (Bar-Ilan University , Israel), Marcy Brink-Danan (Bar-Ilan University , Israel)

Abstract

This presentation explores parenting journeys of Intersex people and individuals with innate Variations of Sex Characteristics (VSC), highlighting the unique challenges people may face in building their chosen families. It draws on qualitative data gathered from Intersex/VSC individuals who are or who aspire to be parents, as well as service providers. It includes a review of reproductive services and options available across Europe, focusing on case study countries Germany and Italy.

People with VSC may encounter medical, legal, and societal obstacles that restrict their reproductive options. These include non-consensual medical interventions during infancy to conform bodies to binary norms, which can lead to lifelong consequences including infertility, dependency on hormone therapy, and psychological harm. Parenting options for those needing reproductive assistance vary widely across Europe and globally, often requiring significant economic investment or being restricted to couples. New technologies such as uterus transplant (UTx) and sperm extraction (TESE/microTESE) offer possibilities yet may come with constraints around couple status and gamete donation. Access to adoption, surrogacy and other reproductive technologies also differs significantly between countries. Additionally, participants share their views on preimplantation genetic testing (PGT), a reproductive technology frequently used to deselect embryos with genetic and chromosomal variations.

By combining firsthand accounts with a review of reproductive services, this presentation underscores the urgent need for policies that support bodily autonomy, protect against discrimination, and expand accessible parenting options for people with VSC. A comprehensive approach is essential to advancing reproductive equity, inclusivity, and respect for variations of sex characteristics.

Exploring Quality of Life, Body Image and Sexual Satisfaction in Intersex Individuals: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis

Chiara Urone, Department of Psychology, Educational Science and Human Movement, University of Palermo (Italy); Costanza Naccari, University of Palermo (Italy); Paola Miano, University of Palermo (Italy)

Abstract

This systematic review and meta-analysis aims to evaluate quality of life and body image among adolescents and adults with variations in sexual characteristics (VSC). It will analyse the experiences of intersex people and those with VSC concerning self-perception, psychological well-being, and overall quality of life at different life stages, with a focus on the relationship between body image and quality of life. A systematic search was conducted using the new Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) protocol. Articles were retrieved from Scopus and Web of Science databases from January 2006 to August 2024. After identifying 1084 scientific articles, 26 studies were included.

The data on quality of life indicate a trend similar to that of the general population. However, studies examining body image and sexual satisfaction reveal findings specific to the intersex population. This review shows that the variable of body image has a significant impact on intersex youth and adult individuals and those with VSC. Even though their responses vary, many individuals report dissatisfaction with sex-related body parts.

Understanding the impact that self-representation of one's body image has on sexual relationships and overall quality of life can support the development of new interventions aimed at developing a satisfactory body perception for intersex individuals. These interventions could help individuals experience their bodies more comfortably, thereby enhancing the overall well-being of intersex adolescents and adults and those with VSC.

Parallel Session 5.2 – Intersex Voices: Rights, Autonomy, and Global Perspectives

11:45 – 13:15
Room E203

Opting Out – Intersex Persons' Entanglements with Medicalisation in the Global South

Arpita Das, The University of Sydney (Australia)

Abstract

Intersex medicalisation in the Global South is often influenced by Euro-centric knowledges. The idea of a quick assignment leading to a stable gender was propagated by the Optimum Gender of Rearing model originating in North America. Such unilinear modes of knowledge production and dissemination from the Global North to the Global South allow limited space for unique Global South knowledges. Such limiting of diverse knowledges is further complicated by histories of colonisation which have led to a further shrinking of the space for local experiences and knowledges. I focus on some of the unique differences and complexities in one such Global South context, India. While there exist busy pockets where intersex people continue to be medicalised in India, many families steer away from medicalisation. Medical archives seldom narrate stories of people who opt out of medicalisation—whether because of lack of access to medical services or financial support, or because they did not feel the need for medical interventions. In such instances, intersex persons' needs are often at odds with medical imperatives. While doctors consider quick interventions crucial to attaining a stable gender, these may have little significance for intersex individuals and their families. Resistance to medicalisation in Global South contexts is often framed through the lens of a 'lack'. I explore some of the other reasons/factors why some intersex people and their families may opt out of medical systems and examine their ongoing negotiation with or resistance to medicalisation.

"I AM" Intersex: Global Voices for Intersex Justice

Kimberly Zieselman, Outright International (United States of America), Outright International (United States of America)

Abstract

This presentation will focus on the author's research and report, "I AM" Intersex: Global Voices for Intersex Justice, published by Outright International in December 2024. The report aims to bring critical intersex human rights issues to the attention of government authorities; funders; stakeholders in the human rights, development, and humanitarian sectors; and LGBTQ activist and organizations which often aspire to include intersex people and issues, but do not always have the knowledge base of tools to do so meaningfully. The report will review case studies covering eleven different countries and four global regions while highlighting both common and unique challenges, as well as progress advancing intersex human rights, demonstrating a dynamic global movement, and calling for increased intersectional and multidisciplinary allyship and funding.

Parallel Session 5.3 – Intersex Rights: Shaping Healthcare, Law, and Justice

11:45 – 13:15
Room E205

Reconciling Healthcare and Human Rights through Law: Lessons from Malta

Mitchell Travis, University of Leeds (United Kingdom); Fae Garland, University of Manchester (United Kingdom)

Abstract

A healthcare/harm duality exists in the way genital surgeries on intersex people are framed by national and supranational institutions. Medical narratives continue to justify such interventions using ever broader conceptions of 'health', while human rights narratives seek to prohibit harmful and nonconsensual violations of a person's bodily integrity. These two fundamentally different accounts of intersex surgeries have made it difficult for human rights critique to infiltrate medicine's self-regulatory sphere. Malta's Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act 2015 (GIGESCA), was the first legislative attempt to embed rights-based approaches within intersex healthcare governance and, in essence, force change within medical practice. The aim of this statutory framework has not only been to frame genital surgeries on intersex minorities as 'harm', but also more broadly to improve intersex healthcare experiences.

This paper considers, one decade since its inception, the impact that legislation has had on medical approaches towards intersex. Specifically, it traces the interaction between medicine and human rights in the post-implementation period of GIGESCA to consider the wider the lessons that can be learned from Malta's experiences. The paper draws attention to the practical impact of the conceptual schism between healthcare and human rights. It highlights the necessary synergies needed between healthcare and human rights actors to be able to introduce such law reform whilst revealing how tensions between these standpoints can lead to significant barriers to meaningful change. Careful thought in design, consultation and implementation practices must be given to reconcile healthcare and human rights and deliver meaningful change.

Visible in Law, Invisible in Data: Constructing a Socio-Legal Framework to include Intersex people in India's Official Statistics

Prashant Singh, UN Advocacy Officer, Intersex Asia (India)

Abstract

The intersex rights movement has gained significant momentum in India but still, there is no coherent understanding of intersex issues in the legal and policy landscape (Singh, 2019). The clinical model followed in India and across the world characterizes people with intersex variations as 'male with disorders of sex development' or 'female with disorders of sex development' (Carpenter, 2022) On the other hand, the legal model conceived in the Transgender Persons Act, 2020 conflates intersex people with transgender people. Such conflation is a key contributor leading to the creation of erroneous categories such as 'Third Gender' or 'Other'. Both models have resulted in the creation of statistical methods that fail to reflect the population of intersex people in official statistics. Exclusion from statistical data is one of the biggest challenges in enforcing the socio-economic rights of intersex people.

Keeping in view the discourse on intersex issues in India, this paper aims to examine how intersex people are conceived by the current clinical and socio-legal models and how is this conception aligned with the narrative of the community and international human rights law. Given the recent legislative and judicial efforts that recognize intersex rights, this paper makes a case for including data on people with variations in sex characteristics in the census and other state-sponsored data collection processes. The paper proposes a principles-based framework to guide the reform process for accurately including Intersex people in the official statistics to ensure equitable distribution of political and economic resources.

Disproportionate UN monitoring of intersex genital mutilation: The need to shift the focus to the Global South

Saskia Caroline Irene Ravesloot, Sciences Po - Paris School of International Affairs (France)

Abstract

This paper contributes to the expanding research on intersex rights (Monro et al. 2021; Carpenter 2023; Gonzalez 2024) by demonstrating that in the fight against Intersex Genital Mutilation (IGM), the international human rights mechanism monitors predominantly progress made in the Global North. This concentration of attention allows the Global South to evade accountability for medical and surgical interventions without informed consent, which is considered as a human rights violation (Carpenter 2016, 2018, 2023; Bauer et al. 2020; Crocetti et al. 2020; Jones 2018; Monro et al. 2021; Leivas 2023; Suess-Schwend 2024). This skewed attention is reflected in the recent Human Rights Council Resolution on intersex persons, primarily introduced by Western countries. Moreover, and of greater concern, it confirms the predominance of the Western medical gaze in framing, defining and pathologising intersex bodies (Suess-Schwend 2024). By using a dataset of 117 IGM-related recommendations issued by the core Treaty Bodies since 2008, I conducted a content analysis focusing on the necessity, temporality, and consequences (Gonzalez 2023) of the interventions to show that the core treaty Bodies are biased in their recommendations related to medical and surgical interventions, I found a stark divide in the number of IGM-related recommendations across the five UN regions. While Africa, the Eastern European Group, Asia, and the Latin American and Caribbean Group receive only a limited number of IGM-related recommendations, the Western European and Others Group receives most of them. To rebalance this inequality and to urge Treaty Bodies to shift their attention to the Global South, I argue that opponents of IGM can leverage this disproportionate attention by carefully crafting advocacy strategies across multiple Treaty Bodies. This is important because an increase in IGM-related recommendations for the Global South will ultimately drive stronger legislative and institutional reforms to ban IGM also in the less targeted regions.

What Care for Intersex and Transgender People?

Martin Gramc, University of Zürich (Switzerland); Alice Margaria, University of Zürich (Switzerland).

Abstract

Over the past decade, several countries have banned medically unnecessary interventions on intersex children, while many others have abolished sterilisation requirements for legal gender recognition and, at times, introduced self-determination models. Against this background, this presentation pursues two interconnected aims. First, it argues that despite these positive developments, most European jurisdiction do not take access to adequate healthcare of intersex and transgender people seriously enough. It is as if recognising the rights of trans and intersex people ends at preserving their physical integrity by abstaining from intervening on their bodies, thus endorsing a limited vision of what justice might mean for them. Second, this presentation explores the intersection of intersex and transgender healthcare, focusing specifically on legal approaches to care for children and adolescents in Germany, Malta and the UK. This exploration highlights how the absence of robust legal frameworks for healthcare access shapes the personal experiences of 'autonomy' and 'care' for intersex and transgender youth.

Roundtable on Intersex Policy: Present and Future

The closing roundtable of Intersex Insights brought together a panel of advocates, policy stakeholders, and community representatives to reflect critically on the current state and future potential of intersex-related policy across Europe.

With a particular focus on Ireland and Italy, the session aimed to identify legal gaps, assess policy developments, and map opportunities for systemic change. Panellists examined the existing legislative landscape and the ways in which intersex people remain unprotected or misrepresented within national and international legal frameworks. They addressed the challenges posed by political inaction, medical exceptionalism, and the absence of binding protections for bodily autonomy. Particular attention was given to the sociopolitical climate in both Ireland and Italy, where cultural, and historical legacies continue to influence institutional practices and legal recognition. The conversation explored how legal realities intersect with lived experiences, emphasising the disconnect between formal rights and everyday access to justice, healthcare, and visibility. Panellists shared examples of effective allyship and collaborative advocacy, while also interrogating forms of support that risk reinforcing harm or tokenism.

The session concluded with reflections on legislative futures, strategies for raising awareness, and the need for intersectional approaches that embed intersex justice within broader movements for gender, LGBTQI+, disability, and reproductive rights.

This roundtable featured:

- Dr Adeline Berry (Intersex Ireland)
- Manuela Falzone (Intersex Esiste)
- Maddalena Bianchi (OII Europe - Organisation Intersex International Europe)
- Luna Laura Liboni (ICCL - Irish Council for Civill Liberties)
- Claudio Uberti (Certi Diritti)
- Ellsworth Camilleri (Council of Europe SOGIESC - Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics – Unit)

Moderated by Dr Sean Saifa Wall, this roundtable was guided with insight and care.

Credits: Claudia Balsamo

Dr Sean Saifa Wall (he/him/his) is a Black queer intersex activist and rising scholar. Born and raised in the Bronx, New York, Saifa attended Williams College where he received a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship to research topics such as *The Social Origins of Hip Hop* and *Black middle-class gentrification in Harlem*. Since graduating from Williams, he has worked on many research projects that amplify the voices of queer, transgender and people of colour communities. He received his PhD as a Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellow at the University of

Huddersfield in England. His research examined the erasure of intersex people from social policy sectors in Ireland and England.

As an activist, Saifa is committed to racial equity and a radical vision of bodily autonomy for people with intersex variations. He made history by confronting the surgeon on ABC News Nightline who performed his gonadectomy at the age of 13. He is co-founder of the Intersex Justice Project whose #EndIntersexSurgery campaign pressured Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago to become the first children's hospital in the United States to denounce and further investigate genital surgeries on Intersex infants. Saifa is the former Board President of interACT: Advocates for Intersex Youth and a former advisor to the Astraea Intersex Fund for Human Rights. Above all else, Saifa is determined to end harmful and invasive genital surgery on intersex children and advocate for affirming healthcare for all people with intersex variations. In addition to his work and activism, he is a loving dad to his dog, Justice.

DAY 3 - 11 JUNE 2025

Early Career Researcher Day in Intersex Studies

The first-ever Early Career Researcher (ECR) Day in Intersex Studies gathered emerging scholars from multiple disciplines and geographies to connect, reflect, and imagine the future of this evolving field. Supported by Psychosocial Studies Intersex – International (PSI-I), the event was rooted in the principles of community, care, and critical engagement.

Participants opened the day by locating themselves—geographically, intellectually, and emotionally, through small-group discussions about identity, motivation, and challenges. A somatic awareness session, introduced by Dr Sean Saifa Wall, invited reflection on how academic and personal pressures are carried in the body, linking intersex research to broader questions of transformation and wellbeing.

The afternoon's World Café led by Dr Marta Prandelli centred three key questions: how we build strong and inclusive networks; how being in intersex studies shapes ECR identity; and what critical questions intersex studies can bring to academia. These rotating discussions produced both visionary and grounded insights about isolation and connection, disciplinary silos, joy, and future directions.

The day closed with a group reflection led by Professor Peter Hegarty on the role of the PSI-I ECR network and potential next steps to strengthen the infrastructure for early career researchers in the field. The event fostered new relationships, a deepened sense of purpose, and concrete ideas for more sustainable scholarly pathways.

Above all, the ECR Day affirmed that intersex studies is not only a field of inquiry, but a space of shared responsibility, one that thrives when shaped by community, vulnerability, and hope.

The World Café during the ECR Day. Credits: Marta Prandelli

The following early career researchers participated in the inaugural ECR Day in Intersex Studies, contributing their perspectives, experiences, and hopes for the future of the field:

- Adeline Berry – University of Huddersfield, United Kingdom

- Aileen Kennedy – University of New England, Australia
- Annette Smith – United Kingdom
- Bonnie Scranton – University of Pennsylvania, United States
- Cecilia Frascaroli – Newcastle University, United Kingdom
- Kayla Horowitz – Cliniques Universitaires Saint-Luc, Belgium
- Lexi Breen – University of Lincoln, United Kingdom
- Macarena Murugarren Lazzuri – Dublin City University, Ireland
- Marie-Lou Nussbaum – Bern University of Teacher Education, Switzerland
- Martin Gramc – University of Zurich, Switzerland
- Maxime Castermans – University of Antwerp, Belgium
- Megan Walker – United Kingdom
- Mehrdad Ali Poor Kalaei – Utrecht University, Netherlands
- Morgan Carpenter – University of Sydney, Australia
- Prashant Singh – Intersex Asia, India
- Rogena Sterling – University of Waikato, New Zealand
- Sam Vaughan – United Kingdom
- Somya Dixit – Dublin City University, Ireland

The day was co-led by Dr Marta Prandelli, Professor Peter Hegarty and Dr Sean Saifa Wall.