



GENDER, DIVERSITY & INTERSECTIONALITY RESEARCH CENTRE

Spring Newsletter 2025

🌸 Grab our Newsletter and take a well-deserved break in the sun!
What was & is on the programme this spring? 🌸

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Editor's Choice

Game-based research: Mapping Sexual Violence in Brussels

Exclusively for the readers of our newsletter, RHEA interviewed Danielle Fernandes, EUTOPIA doctoral researcher at RHEA (Collaborative PhD: VUB - NOVA Lisboa). We discuss her current research project on gender-based violence in Brussels, which you can follow on her Instagram [@Cityconfessions.be](#)!

A portrait of Danielle Fernandes, a woman with long dark hair, looking directly at the camera. The portrait is set against a light orange background with abstract wavy lines.

Editor's Choice

"Talking about harassment can be difficult enough; reflecting deeply on how one's identity shapes experiences of violence adds another layer of complexity. "

- Danielle Fernandes

Your current research focusses on how identity and space shape experiences of sexual violence and harassment in Brussels. You're currently using a unique method to discuss this topic with research participants—a boardgame. Why did you choose this method?

The idea of using a boardgame started with a previous community-based project where I collaborated with ZIJkant vzw to develop a bystander training intervention. Together, we created City Confessions, a boardgame designed to provide a more engaging way to navigate difficult conversations about sexual violence and harassment. Through gameplay and peer conversations, players learned how to identify transgressive behavior and how to respond safely and effectively.

During these sessions, I saw firsthand how effective a boardgame could be in stimulating open and thoughtful discussions. The game naturally builds a sense of camaraderie among players, triggers critical reflections on a wide range of

topics, and makes it easier for people to share personal stories and learn from one another. Seeing its impact, I decided to channel the game into my current research as a discussion tool for focus group discussions.

[> Keep reading](#)

Activities

23/04 Docu & Sofa Talk: Intersex, Beyond the Medical



Join RHEA & Spectrum GSA for a screening of the documentary "Kiezen, Snijden, Zwijgen"/"Choosing, Cutting, Acquiescing". In a sofa talk with Dr. Marjolein Van Bavel (Radboud, UAntwerp), and gender politics researcher Dra. Audrey Aegerter (ULB, IGVM), we will open up a broader discussion on intersex issues, body norms and legislation, and identity.

[> Register now, since capacity is limited!](#)

Two days later, you can join us for the Intersex PillowTalk, a group conversation sitting on (literal) pillows with some tea, coffee and sweets. The Pillow Talk is a more intimate and safe (but brave) space to connect on the topics of Intersex,

Highlight: RHEA Gender Lecture Series

Missed our first Rhea Gender Lecture Series?

Read a preview of our throwback!

Wie is er bang van gender?

"Green Party politician Celia Groothedde spoke passionately about the struggle, but also the opportunities of political action for countering anti-gender rhetoric. LGBTQIA+-activists' Joppe de Campeneere (entrepreneur) and Rémy Bonny (Forbidden Colours) highlighted the challenges activists now face and ..."

Decolonial Feminism and Palestine

"The audience was visibly moved by this courageous testimony, which allowed them to really understand what alternative, decolonial knowledge production as explained by Dr. Sheik can look like. A night to remember! ..."

Rhea & GreenTeam VUB collab: Women's March

"On Saturday the 8th of March (International Women's Day) we gathered at the VUB to paint signs with feminist messages to take with us to the March. From statistics about violence against women, to messages of trans inclusion and drawings inspired by Margaret Atwood's 'the Handmaids Tale...'"

[> Keep reading](#)

Want more? You can still [register](#) for our last Gender lecture of the semester, Intersex, Beyond the Medical!









New Team Members

Nina Szyf (PhD)

Nina Szyf has recently joined the Rhea team as a PhD student (joint VUB - UGent PhD) within the FWO-SBO SWYPPE-project on the relationship between pornography consumption, perception of pornographic material, sexual functioning, and well-being in various minority groups. With a background in Communication Sciences, her research focuses on the societal impact of digital phenomena, particularly in the field of sexuality and media.

Nina aims to bridge academic insights with practical applications to foster a more inclusive and informed understanding of sexuality in the digital age. Her previous work focused on the legal and social dimensions of deepnudes, digital partner violence and online safety, partnering with e.g. the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men and Child Focus.



Key words that describe my work:

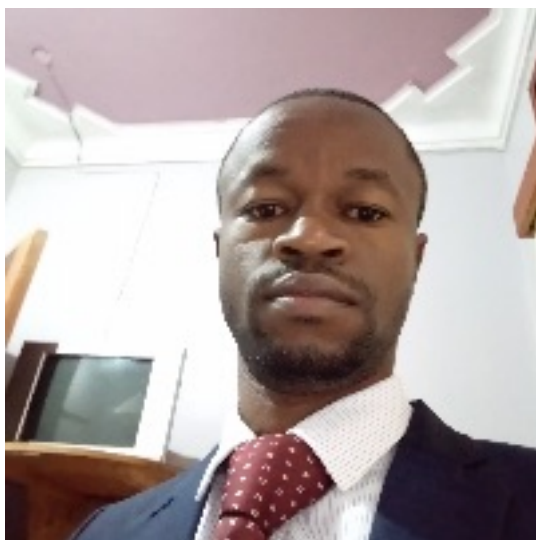
Intersectionality, Sexuality, Digitality

My favourite book in gender, diversity and intersectionality:

Hood Feminism – Mikki Kendall

I look forward to:

engaging in meaningful conversations with young people about their perceptions of online sexual content—how they navigate, interpret, and experience it in their daily lives.



Key words that describe my work:

Adolescent Sexual Health,
Reproductive Health

Enos Mirembe Masereka (PhD)

Enos Mirembe Masereka is a VUB-MUST PhD Student within the VLIR-UCoBS project: University as a Facilitator for Community Based Sustainable Solutions to Demographic Challenges in South Western Uganda. He currently conducts research on adolescent pregnancy prevention in Uganda and teaches Midwifery, Reproductive Health and Demography at the Mountains of the Moon University in Uganda.

Enos' area of specialization is

I look forward to:

connecting with the RHEA team and deepen my understanding of the role of gender in adolescent health.

Lula Maris (Coordinator)

Lula Maris has (re)joined our team as the Coordinator of Rhea! After several years as Rhea's jobstudent, she will now be overseeing the daily working of the centre, the communication and the event-planning.

Lula obtained her Master of Arts in Philosophy and Moral Sciences degree at the VUB in 2024, with a dissertation on narrative meaning in secular society. She specializes in narrative (feminist) ethics, and has applied for an FWO PhD-scholarship on the same topic.

She is currently completing the Research Master in Philosophy; preparing for a career in research. In 2023, she interned at Knack Magazine and wrote several articles for their online magazine. In 2022, she did part of her Philosophy programme at the Freie Universität in Berlin, Germany.

Midwifery and Women's Health with a specific interest in adolescent sexual and reproductive health. He holds a Master of Nursing (Midwifery & Women's Health), Master of Public Health (Population and Reproductive Health) and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing.



Key words that describe my work:

Narrative resistance, Feminist ethics, Identity

My favourite book in gender, diversity and intersectionality is:

The Right to Sex - Amia Srinivasan

I look forward to:

further put Rhea on the map as a hub for Expertise on Gender, Diversity and Intersectionality, with great events and communication!

Must-reads

- [Article: The racialization of radicalization and](#)

- [Article: A genealogy of silencing: tracing the](#)

terrorism: Belgian political language on Muslims and Islam

(Authors: Elias Woodbridge, An-Sofie Vanhouche & Iman Lechkar, Journal: *Ethnicities*)

- [Article](#): **Norms of masculinity: community voices on sexual and reproductive health communication in rural southwestern Uganda**
(Authors: Dorcus Achen et al., Journal: *Culture, Health & Sexuality*)
- [Interview](#) with Dr. Hannelore Van Bavel on **FGM vs. genital cosmetic surgery**
(*Wetenschap Brussel*)
- [Chapter](#): **Gender and multiculturalism**
(Authors: Gily Coene & Sawitri Saharso, In: *Research Handbook on Multiculturalism*)

impact of critiques of the hegemonic discourse on female genital mutilation

(Authors: Hannelore Van Bavel, Natasha Carver & Dorothy Takyiakwaa, Journal: *Women's History Review*)

- [Article](#): **"Down the "Black Hole" of Sexual Violence in the Brussels Nightlife: A Qualitative Exploration of Social Media Testimonials**
(Authors: Danielle Fernandes, Maïté Meeûs (@balance_ton_bar) and Gily Coene, Journal: *Violence Against Women*)
- [Chapter](#): **The Benefit of the Doubt: The Logic Behind 'Radical' Gynaecological Operations (Belgium, 1890s–1900s)**
(Author: Jolien Gijbels, In: *Dealing with Medical Uncertainty in and through the History of Medicine*)



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