

October 2, 2025

CONSTRUCTS

Women, Gender, & Sexualities Committee Newsletter

Letter From the Chair

As the incoming WGS committee chair, I'm excited to welcome you to the MSSA 2025 Annual Meeting in North Augusta, South Carolina. Please join us for the **Women, Gender, and Sexualities Caucus Luncheon on Thursday, October 16th from 12:30-1:30 pm** in the Hampton Terrace 3A. This luncheon is a chance to: connect with colleagues who share your commitment to research on women, gender, and sexualities; build community among members of historically marginalized genders and sexualities; discuss current committee priorities and shape future directions; celebrate our collective accomplishments and nominate leaders for WGS roles; and share ideas for sessions and panels at future MSSA meetings. A limited number of complimentary lunches will be available for registered MSSA conference attendees—so come early and join the conversation!

In this newsletter:

- From the Chair
- WGS Scholarship
- Sessions of Interest

Jennifer Cheek, PhD, Committee Chair
Women, Gender & Sexualities Committee

WGS Travel Scholarship Awardees



Cassie Joy Sistoso is a scholar, advocate, and graduate student at Middle Tennessee State University whose research examines maternal mortality, reproductive health, and the structural inequities shaping medical outcomes. She holds a B.S. in Songwriting, a graduate certificate in Women's and Gender Studies, and will complete another graduate certificate in Applied Social Research and a Master of Arts in Sociology at MTSU. Alongside her academic work, she is deeply engaged in advocacy and volunteer efforts that expand access to reproductive health resources in Tennessee. As she prepares to enter the doctoral stage of her career, she remains committed to combining rigorous scholarship with transformative public impact.

Mary Holiman is a PhD student in Communication, Culture, and Media Studies at Howard University. I often say I was a feminist before I fully understood the term. My research trajectory reflects this—grounded in Black feminist thought and intersectionality since my undergraduate work on adverse childhood experiences and delinquency among Black girls. Over time, I've embraced the ways my personal passions shape my scholarship. Whether reflecting on cultural artifacts—from Beyoncé's *Church Girl* to the Southern Gothic horror film, *Sinners*—or analyzing embodied practices like pole dancing, I approach research with a commitment to honoring Black women's creative and resistant traditions. Last year, I launched a project titled *The Witches You Couldn't Kill Were Black: This Magic Is Resistance*, exploring African traditional religions and their role in resisting systemic oppression. More recently, I've expanded my work into studies of gaming as imaginative play for Black women. I believe scholarship should be rigorous yet joyful, and I aim to model an academic brand that is both accessible and transformative.



Sessions and Papers of Interest

Thursday, October 16

Identity Work Session | 11:00 am-12:15 pm | Hampton Terrace 3A

- *Pole Dancing for the Soul: Reclaiming the Black Body Through Pole Practice*. Mary Virginia Holiman, Howard University

Medical Sociology and Mental Health | 11:00 am-12:15 pm | Sesame

- *Gender, ethnicity and SES disparities in self-rated health in Nepal*. Sanjeev Acharya, Arkansas State University

MSSA Community Roundtable Discussions | 11:00 am-12:15 pm | Taft

- *Crisis in Slow Motion: Reclaiming Black Male Futures Through Career Readiness and Mental Health in Higher Education*. Frank Wood, Norfolk State University, Austin W Ashe, Norfolk State University, Robert K Perkins, Auburn University at Montgomery
- *The Consequences of Anti-DEI Initiatives in Academia*. Giselle C. M. Greenidge, Northwest Missouri State University

Plenary: Embracing Complexity: Navigating the Human Experience Through Disasters with Cultural Competence | 2:00 pm-3:15 pm | Hampton Terrace Ballroom 1 + 2

Global and Domestic Inequalities | 3:30 pm-4:45 pm | Hampton Terrace 3B

- *Women's Reproductive Health: Life on a Seesaw*. Jewell Russell, University of South Carolina Aiken

Migration and Displacement | 3:30 pm-4:45 pm | Sesame

- *Crossing the Line: Felani Khatun's Tragedy and the Gendered, Racialized Politics of the Bangladesh-India Border*. Mashaekh Hassan, Florida Atlantic University

Friday, October 17

Undergraduate Research in Progress: Crime and Deviance I | 8:00 am-9:15 am | Sesame

- *Women in Prison: A Policy Recommendation*. Kaylee Allmoslochner, University of South Carolina Aiken
- *Defying Gender Stereotypes - Women Drug Smugglers*. Kaitlyn Roberts, University of South Carolina Aiken

Presidential Thematic Session: First Responder Frameworks of Disaster Knowledge | 9:30 am-10:45 am | 1906

- *"We Are More Than Just Nurses": Navigating Gendered Professions, Motherhood, and the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Autumn Rena Martin, University of Louisville

Gender and Culture | 11:00 am-12:15 pm | Hampton Terrace 3A

- *The LGBTQIA+ Tattoo: Stories of Identity, Affiliation, and Restoration*. Jerome Koch, Texas Tech University, Patricia Maloney, Texas Tech University
- *Exploring the Experiences of Lesbians, Queer Women, and Non-Binary Individuals in LGBTQ+ Spaces: An Examination of Inclusivity and Navigation in the Absence of Lesbian-Centered Venues*. Mack Hall, Middle Tennessee State University
- *Unforgivable Curses: Identity Dilemmas and Emotion Work in a Fractured Fandom*. Jacob Church, Jacksonville State University, Brianna Turgeon, Jacksonville State University, Addie Lott, Jacksonville State University
- *Black and Queer Women's Experiences with Abuse and Purity Culture in the Evangelical Church*. Ashleigh McKinzie, Middle Tennessee State University, Patricia Richards, University of Georgia
- *I Don't Trust These Gays: Deception and Queer Relationships in Popular Film*. Eryn Grucza Viscarra, Georgia College

Graduate Research | 11:00 am-12:15 pm | Sesame

- *We're Guessing: The Data Crisis in Maternal Mortality Research in the United States*. Cassie Sistoso, Middle Tennessee State University

Violence and Healing | 2:00 pm-3:15 pm | Hampton Terrace 3A

- *Sexual Violence Risk Factors among Indigenous Women and Girls in the U.S. and Canada: A Social Ecological Review*. Sara Tehrani, University of Central Florida

- *Education and Public Awareness Campaigns Addressing Violence Against Women*. Lisa A. Eargle, Francis Marion University, Jessica Lynn Burke, Francis Marion University, Ashraf Esmail, Dillard University

Undergraduate Research | 2:00 pm-3:15 pm | Sesame

- *Addressing the Decline of Men in Higher Education: The Experiences of Men in College in the U.S. Rural South*. Ronnie Williams, University of North Carolina at Pembroke, Melanie Anne Escue, University of North Carolina at Pembroke

Family and Households | 3:30 pm-4:45 pm | Hampton Terrace 3A

- *Son Preference and Its Impact on Modern Contraceptive Method Choices among Married Women in Bangladesh*. Israt Sultana Nishe, Texas Tech University

Saturday, October 18: Virtual Sessions Saturday

Intersectionality and Wellbeing | 9:30 am-10:45 am | Virtual Saturday D

- *Postpartum Maternal Mental Health: Stress, Intersectionality, and Inequality*. Mary-Margaret Williams, Georgia Southern University, April Schueths, Georgia Southern University

Technology Studies | 11:00 am-12:15 pm | Virtual Saturday B

- *Gender Differences in the Academic Impact of Recreational Internet Use: Evidence from Chinese College Students*. Tianao Gui, Johns Hopkins University

Lived Experiences | 2:00 pm-3:15 pm | Virtual Saturday A

- *Straight or Curly: How does Hairstyle affect the Likelihood of Hiring a Black Women?* Reina Quinn, Louisiana State University
- *"Women are Just for Procreation": Exploring the Impacts of Patriarchal Hegemony in Restricting Women's Agency among Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh*. Md Shihabul Islam, Oklahoma State University

Violence and Healing | 2:00 pm-3:15 pm | Virtual Saturday C

- *A State-Level Analysis of the Abuse-to-Prison Pipeline: Domestic Violence, Child Exposure, Law, and Gendered Incarceration*. Julio Richard Montanez, University of Central Florida

Labor and Organizations II | 2:00 pm-3:15 pm | Virtual Saturday D

- *Veiling and Unveiling as Gendered Resistance: Feminist Agency Across Authoritarian Regimes*. Asena Karipek, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign