Contesting Gender, Reclaiming Community: AntiLGBTQ+ Collective Action and Transfemini ne Resistance in Southern Italy

Francesca Margherita De Falco, University of Naples Federico II, Napoli, Italia

Abstract

Collective action is often understood as a vehicle for social justice and community empowerment. Yet collective mobilization can also reinforce exclusionary norms and resist the recognition of marginalized communities. This presentation brings together two complementary studies conducted in Italy to examine these contrasting dynamics: the psychosocial foundations of anti-LGBTQ+ collective action and community-led practices of recognition, care, and resistance among transfeminine communities in Naples.

The first study employed a cross-sectional survey of 396 participants and structural equation modeling to investigate how heteronormative beliefs, multidimensional heterosexism, and LGBTQ+-related conspiracy beliefs are associated with conservative collective action intentions. Findings indicated that normative beliefs about gender were consistently associated with prejudicial attitudes, while aversive heterosexism was particularly relevant to conspiracy beliefs. These beliefs, in turn, were positively associated with intentions to mobilize against LGBTQ+ rights, highlighting how normative and ideological processes may sustain exclusionary collective action.

The second study adopted a participatory, insider ethnographic approach to explore transfeminine community practices in Naples, focusing on the Pupatell3 collective and the cultural traditions associated with *femminielli*. Drawing on participant observation, focus groups, collective documentation, and community dialogue, the research examined how self-organized spaces and culturally situated rituals become resources for belonging, recognition, mutual care, and political visibility. Particular attention was given to intergenerational encounters, the contested meanings of cultural memory, and community members' efforts to reclaim authority over the representation and preservation of their histories.

Together, these studies illuminate a central tension within collective action: the same broader sociopolitical context can foster mobilization aimed at restricting LGBTQ+ rights while also generating grassroots practices that challenge exclusion and create alternative forms of community life. From a community psychology perspective, the presentation argues for examining not only the mechanisms through which oppressive ideologies become collectively mobilized, but also how marginalized communities produce knowledge, sustain solidarity, and enact social transformation.

Keywords: Community Psychology; Collective Action; Anti-LGBTQ+ Ideologies; Transfeminine Communities; Femminielli; Participatory Research.