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Living Beyond the Binary: Experiences of Shame and Violence Within the Genderqueer Community

Vasiliki Tsagkroni

1 INTRODUCTION

“Men are motivated when they feel needed while women are motivated when they feel cherished” (Gray, 2009: 11). In *Men are from Mars, women are from Venus* (originally published in 1992), Gray reduces human behaviour to a simplified gender-specific approach, where men and women are alien species, each acclimated to its own planet’s society, culture and customs. The idea that sexes from the same species exhibit different characteristics beyond the range of physical attributes is incorporated in the meaning of “dimorphism” and the debate on human evolution (see Charles Darwin’s *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 1871). Yet, sex is rather multidimensional and thus, along

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with gender cannot be thought or perceived in black-and-white terms of absolutes.

The distinction between bodily sex and gender has been regularly made in the literature, focusing on the anatomical differences and the social gender conventions. However, the growing discussion on gender recognition and visibility has challenged the reconceptualisation of gender itself even in the feminist communities. And while the intersectional feminist movement aims to be more inclusive by acknowledging the fact that all people have different experiences and identities, reflecting therefore on the effects of how different forms of discrimination combine, overlap or intersect when it comes to gender, there are still many feminist theorists that strongly support the essentialist view of gender, which attributes femininity to female-assigned bodies and masculinity to male-assigned bodies.

However, as Butler (2004: 13) highlights, assigning roles based on biology is a mechanism of reinforcing patriarchy, while notions and performances of gender diverge upon “geopolitical boundaries and cultural constraints”. For Butler, gender is not tied to material bodily facts, but it is more like a “corporeal style” which is both “intentional and performative”, and it is “real only to the extent that it is performed” while being open to change and contestation, that “regularly conceals its genesis” (1988: 521–522). Moreover, for Butler sex is a “cultural norm which governs the materialisation of bodies”, a cultural construct that is forcibly materialised through time, that is also subject to change and is designated by gender (1993). For the purposes of this chapter, gender is defined as being socially constructed, gender binary refers to the binary system where gender is perceived in a two-point scale, that of a man or a woman, and gender non-binary is demarcated as genders outside this man/woman polarity, labelled here as genderqueer.

Reflecting on this binary framework, Sedgwick (1990) talks about how standard binary oppositions limit freedom and understanding and present it in a cruder way. Sedgwick examines sexual orientation as a definer of personal identity and argues that several sexual contradictions result in a modern misunderstanding of what sexual orientation is. This chapter takes the argument further, by taking the discussion back to perceptions and constructions of gender, sexed or not, and further explores these in line with the notions of shame and violence, in order to identify experiences of shame related to gender.

According to Carol Gilligan (1982), gender creates a structure of domination and subordination. For Gilligan, gender operates at several levels: desire is shameful, defines your identity, affects how you are perceived by people. Gilligan also argues that patriarchy is based on gender, which is either masculine or feminine, that is also constructed in this absolute binary, and discusses patriarchy along with the “shame” dynamic. Huckabay (1996: 145) similarly interweaves gender and shame, highlighting that it is through “the experience of shame and the process of shaming that societies construct and control the distribution of differentiated values, roles, affective domains, and points of view to men and to women”. In other words, shame is vested in bodies.

In James Gilligan’s (1996) work, shame is a necessary but not sufficient cause of violence, as there are preconditions that need to be met. The work of Gilligan is placed within a series of extensive academic works on the field of behavioural sciences that try to understand what causes violence in connection to the notion of shame and rejection that lead to inducement of aggression and is perceived as antecedent to violence.

Building on the existing work on shame in relation to gender and violence, the current study focuses on gender identities beyond the binary spectrum and explores shame as a way of relational process with the other and the idea of identity (see Probyn, 2005), in relation to expressions and experiences of violence.

More specifically, as shown below, though the literature so far has managed to address issues of shame in relation to sexual and gender identities, and issues of self-esteem, the connection between shame and violence and self-concept within the genderqueer community has yet to be documented. Self-concept is conceptualised as the way gender influences how an individual perceives oneself in terms of respect, confidence and expression, as well as related to self-notions of masculinity and femininity.

To discuss shame and violence experiences, the study builds on the Experience of Shame Scale (Andrews et al., 2002), creating a variation where we also measure experiences of violence in everyday life in a passive way (directed violence against a person) or active way (person as actor engaging in violent behaviour). By doing a comparative analysis between the UK, the Netherlands and Greece, the chapter investigates perceptions of masculinity and femininity within the genderqueer community and explores how non-binary individuals are perceived within the binary gender system. The chapter acknowledges that current studies focusing

on binary transgender divisions do not fully represent the intricacy of the rich variety of the transgender experience. It therefore focuses specifically on non-binary identities, defined here as genderqueer. The study aims to underline the role of culture in leading to the re-evaluation of the self along with the sense and impact of shame as a relational process with the self and the society. The study argues that perpetuation of shame underlies low self-esteem and violence, whereas self-concept ameliorates their occurrence within the genderqueer community.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The term “shame” can be seen as a generic word for a series of variety of emotions: being disrespected, rejected, invisible, ridiculed, disgraced and humiliated, among others. Shame is a social emotion but also an experience that is widely regarded as a negative and harmful “other-mediated emotion about oneself”, integrating a sense of failure in the status of the self (Edwards, 2020). It involves expectations as imposed by others, e.g. a violation of some role of standard or a failure to meet those expectations that can also be amplified in the way of developing expectations on oneself. Therefore, the propensity to experience the emotion of shame can be traced in response to specific topics related to shame, e.g. gender, sexuality, body, behaviour among other personal characteristics, also associated with the notion of self-esteem (Hejdenberg & Andrews, 2011). This experience is often accompanied with the feeling of humiliation and worthlessness, and shame is interpreted more as evidence of the “bad self” (Pineles et al., 2006) and can resolve to a breach in the social bond.

Shame has been theorised across various disciplines e.g. literature, anthropology, sociology, gender and queer studies, leading to different forms of conceptualisation. The detrimental effects of shame have been analysed through its psychological impact, and are often associated with maladaptive behaviour, withdrawal, depression and even self-destructive behaviours fed by social rejection (see Giordano, 2018). Therefore, the act of studying shame is a reflection of who we are and has an individual and collective impact on daily life. As Probyn (2005: 3) puts it “there is something about shame that is terribly important. By denying or denigrating it or trying to eradicate it, we impoverish ourselves and our attempts to understand human life”; that is because shame can go to the core of one’s identity, may create harmful dynamics and make people feel “exposed, inferior and degraded” (Davidoff, 2002: 623). With society

playing a significant role in shaping an individual's social competence in line with structured roles, attitudes and standards, diverting from this role model of competence can lead to experiencing shame. Gender is highly associated with structured roles and social competence.

Shame has been perceived as “the primary instrument of gender socialisation” (Huckabay, 1996), and “being located in and in relation to the body” (Probyn, 2000:14). In this sense, the experience of the body impacts on the manifestations of shame in multiple ways, with stereotypes of gender taking place in the interpretation of such manifestations. As Ferguson et al. (2000) point out, when discussing issues of gender, shame and unwanted identities, gender-role stereotypes are well integrated in the literature when analysing the socialisation of emotion, pointing out to gender-defined expectations in relation to identities, emotions and behaviours, with women being more shame-prone in comparison to men (Reimer, 1997), something that reflects back to the masculine and feminine gender-role socialisation (Crick & Zahn-Waxler, 2003; Rosenfield, 2000). In this context men are seen more active, dominant, stronger and tougher than women, with the latter being more passive and powerless and more susceptible towards shame, feeding the gender stereotype differences in experiences of shame.

For Carol Gilligan (Chapter 3), if “shaming is the mechanism, gender is the lever, in setting up a structure of inequality, of domination and subordination”, with gender affecting the way one is perceived by the other, and impacting the social advancement of oneself, with shame being an effect that cannot be excised from one's body (Sedgwick, 2009). Similarly, Huckabay (1996: 146) states that gender and shame exist between the “environment and the self-system”, [...] both “highly charged socio-political phenomena”, and “deeply personal and private ground for the experience of the self”. In an “imprisoning” gender-binary format though, which supports culturally contingent decisions and endorses heterosexuality, for genderqueer identities the complexity and diversity of the gender experience obfuscate shame experiences.

What becomes evident is that the experience of the self is critical and cannot be distinguished from gender and shame. Self-concept refers to one's self-perception, formed through experience and interpretations of one's environment (see Shavelson et al., 1976). And though self-concept has often been referred to as self-esteem, this study distinguishes between the two terms. Self-esteem is understood more broadly in the sense of the esteem one holds themselves to when interpreting the perceptions of

others, whereas self-concept is understood more specifically in the sense of self-worth (Harter, 1998) and the ability to recognise the value of oneself, and it is related to the personal and social identity, that is closely connected to gender and shame.

The dominant literature on gender in relation to shame focuses on the binary of man/woman, and in queer literature there is a lack of studies documenting the experience of shame in gender minorities. Sedgwick (2009: 60–61) associates “queerness” with “structural forms of expression” developing from “shame”, and sees queerness as a sense of identity that is “tuned most durably to the note of shame but also as a motivator of creativity”. Building on this idea, Morrison (2015) discusses the “dignity of queer shame” as something that provides queerness with a meaning but also motivates creative expressiveness to queers who utilise it and dignify it. Sedgwick (2003: 37) links shame to visibility and characterises it as an environment in which the “question of identity arises most originally and most relationally”; an environment that also inspires a consistent connectedness and communication with another. Thus, shame can be seen as an instance of societal contempt, prejudice or even physical threat attached to stigmatisation (Meyer, 2003). For Sedgwick (2009) “shame defines the space wherein a sense of self will develop”; it is, therefore, fundamental to the process of forming one’s identity within a social and cultural context.

Shame and gay pride have been associated in various discourses, addressing questions of “outing” and being closeted all linked to the notion of shame in relation to sexuality and stigmas. Shame can push oneself to suppress their “true self” in order to avoid social isolation (see Green, 1987). In an effort to understand the emotion of shame in transgender people, Giordano (2018) offers a philosophical analysis of the emotion of shame, reflecting on how it is manifested, understood and dealt with, in order to reflect on what it means to experience shame as a transgender individual. Moreover, in relation to shame and the LGBT community, *The Velvet Rage* by Alan Downs (2012) is one of the few works that specifically talk about shame in a non-heterosexual format, focusing on gay men’s journey through shame and anger. And while Downs work is helpful, however, the specific focus on gay men highlights the need for broadening the research more. Following a different approach, Greene and Britton (2013) examined whether forgiveness of the self and others mediates the correlation between shame proneness and self-esteem in the LGBT community.

The negative relationship between shame and self-esteem has also been probed in the literature. Indicating a sense of self-worth and adequacy, high self-esteem can be seen as a key variable in forging interpersonal relationships and resilience, whereas low self-esteem correlates with an increase in vulnerability and negative emotions e.g. depression, guilt, competence to overcome difficulties and shame (see Branden, 1994; Gilbert & Procter, 2006). As shame reflects a form of deflation of oneself, it involves a feeling of self-disembowelment (Tangney & Dearing, 2002). In their meta-analysis, Budiarto and Helmi (2021) state that shame and the evaluations of the self have an impact on the fluctuation of self-esteem and may be crystallised into a trait-like proneness of shame, involving feelings of inferiority, despair and helplessness along with an effort to hide yourself from another (Andrews et al., 2002).

In relation to other emotions, there is a close connection between shame and anger, with shame often fuelling anger and thus anger occurring in shame-prompting situations (Tangney et al., 1992). For Lewis (1992) anger shifts the focus from oneself to another target or against oneself, with shame reversing the self-passive status, to a powering agency being reclaimed through expressions of anger (Miller, 1985) and violence as a coping defence mechanism, with shame as the first evoked emotion that leads to aggression and then violence, in an escalating format (Scheff & Retzinger, 1991). It is what Gilligan (1996) calls a pathogen of violence and highlights that the most powerful way to shame anyone is by the means of violence.

Therefore, people resort to violence when they feel that they can “wipe out shame only by shaming those who they feel shamed them” (Gilligan, 1996: 1163). Nathanson (1992) identified four phases of shame: triggering, physiological response, cognitive review and response, and classifies what he calls a “compass of shame”, four categories of responses to the shaming experience: withdrawal, avoidance, attack self and attack other. For Nathanson, (1992) shame and pride are ends of the same axis. In Gilligan’s words, “The purpose of violence is to diminish the intensity of shame and replace it as far as possible with its opposite, pride, thus preventing the individual from feeling overwhelmed by the feeling of shame” (Gilligan, 1996: 111).

Shame and violence can have an overpowering cultural impact as both shame and gender perceptions differ extensively across cultures and periods of time. Shame facilitates a sense of self by sustaining a specific

cultural status quo, which can be interpreted as a pattern of embracing social norms in a subjective devaluing manner (Greene & Britton, 2013).

This study endeavours to bring together and understand shame and violence experiences in a non-binary gender format within the genderqueer community. In accordance with previous empirical findings, the expectation is to find significant correlations between shame and violence in those identifying as genderqueer across different cultural environments. This study operationalises shame in both a positive and a negative way. On the positive side, the experience of shame serves as a driver response expressed through higher self-concept and higher self-esteem, meaning that in a way it activates a mechanism that leads to the individual resisting/rejecting social pressure, through pride, self-actualisation etc., breaking free of society's shackles. On the negative side though, the experience of shame serves as a defence response that includes a lower self-concept and lower self-esteem and is associated, but not limited to, possible violence tendencies (interpreting attacking the self and attacking others in Nathanson's argument). Additionally, self-concept is operationalised by having three specific components (all positive): self-respect, self-confidence and confidence in gender expression.

Specifically, the study tests for the following hypotheses as applied to the case study of the genderqueer community:

Hypothesis 1: Self-concept is negatively correlated with gender identity having an impact on personal and professional relationships.

Hypothesis 2: Shame is negatively correlated with self-esteem, and self-concept is negatively correlated with shame.

Hypothesis 3: Self-concept is negatively correlated to violence, whereas shame is positively correlated to violence.

3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Measurement: The empirical analysis of this study builds on existing research and brings together five different scale measurements that address four different variables in relation to shame. Similar to the work of Greene and Britton (2013), this study enriches and pushes further the existing research on shame by placing new emphasis on the importance of self-concept of the genderqueer community and attitudes towards

violence and aggression, in an effort to further understand the dimension of gender and shame in different cultural environments. The study aims to explore the relationship between the selected four variables: self-concept, shame, self-esteem and violence, and to provide a comparison between the three selected cases: Greece, the Netherlands and the UK. The comparative character of the study allows for some generalisation based on the data. The population sample was identified as genderqueer (in terms of gender).

Impact of gender and self-concept: Respondents were asked to assess the impact of their gender in relation to themselves (addressing self-respect, self-confidence and confidence of gender expression, the latter meaning a level of comfort in which a person chooses to present their gender to the world around them e.g. clothing, pronouns etc.), their personal relations (friends, family and romantic life) and their work prospects (employment and wages). Respondents answered using a scale that ranged from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much). Sexuality was not included as part of the survey.

Shame: Shame was assessed by using the Experience of Shame Scale (Andrews et al., 2002: 32), where the authors designed a 25-item questionnaire that measures characterological (addressing items on personal habits, manner with others, sort of person you are and personal ability), bodily (regarding ones' body), and behavioural shame along with self-perceptions (doing things wrong or saying something stupid and failing in competitive situations). For each of the shame areas covered, there are three questions that address experiential, cognitive and behavioural components. Respondents' answer using a scale that ranges from 1 (not at all) to 4 (very much).

Self-Esteem: Self-esteem was assessed by using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), a 10-item scale that measures self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self. Respondents' answer using a scale that ranges from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree).

Violence: Violence (passive and active) was assessed by creating a 12-item scale, that measures aggressive response to shame, experiences of sexism and general beliefs on violence and power/safety. Respondents were asked to encounter to everyday experiences and answering by using a scale that ranges from 1 (never) to 5 (every day). Violence is approached in a triple

way: as violence received (experienced as a victim), violence carried out against someone else (as perpetrator) and violent thoughts in the mind.

Case studies: The cases have been selected due to the countries' different approaches towards LGBT rights and gender equality. In the Gender Equality Index, the Netherlands ranks 5th, the UK 6th and Greece last (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2020). The Netherlands has been one of the most liberal countries in the world, legalising homosexuality in 1811. Since 2013, transgender people are allowed to legally change their gender without any surgery or hormonal therapy. Registered partnerships, same sex marriage and adoption rights for same sex couples have been allowed since the 2000s, and with the Equal Treatment Act in 1994, the country established discrimination protections on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expressions.

In the UK, homosexuality was decriminalised for men only in 1967 (England and Wales). Transgender people have had the ability to legally change gender since 2005, and although a sex reassignment surgery is not required, the person has to present evidence to a Gender Recognition Panel, which considers their case and issues a Gender Recognition Certificate. Civil partnerships have been allowed since 2005, and in 2014 same sex marriage was also recognised. The Equality Act of 2010 provides discrimination protections on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Finally, in Greece, homosexuality has been legal since 1951. Until the Legal Gender Recognition Law of 2017, transgender people could only be legally recognised after being sterilised/neutered and having a sex reassignment surgery, something that is no longer required. A same sex cohabitation agreement has been permitted since 2015, but there are no adoption rights for same sex couples. Since 2005, a series of anti-discrimination laws have been established, and by 2015 all anti-LGBT discrimination explicitly banned covering sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics. Additionally, the civic culture of the selected countries also differs in terms of values and attitudes towards among others e.g. religion, family, politics, trust, tolerance and individualism versus communitarianism (see The Inglehart-Welzel World Cultural Map—World Values Survey 7, 2020). With the Netherlands being the most progressive, the UK seen more moderately and Greece being more conservative the expectation is that there will be differences in the sample

reflecting the different cultures towards the recognition of LGBT rights and gender equality as an indicator.

Participants: For the distribution of the survey, snowball sampling was employed. The population was identified as genderqueer individuals, which meant that a random sample was near impossible. Instead, by using snowballing to establish contact with genderqueer networks in all three selected countries relevant to the study, the survey was disseminated on social media platforms and ran for the duration of one week. Participants completed an online questionnaire that included scales to assess self-concept, shame, self-esteem and violence. The questionnaire elicited information about several demographic variables, including, country of origin, racial/ethnic identity, age, education, relationship status and profession.

A total of 201 individuals participated in the study. The majority of participants are located in the age groups of 25–34 (42.9%) and 35–44 (39.2%) years old. Frequencies were determined regarding group identification, ethnicity/race, education and relationship status. Approximately with 60% of the sample being largely identify their ethnic/racial identity as white and 25% reported having a mixed/multiple ethnic background. Reportedly, 33.3% have a postgraduate education and 28.6% a bachelor's degree and in terms of relationship status, 47.6% stated to be in a relationship whereas 28.6% are single. In terms of country of residence, 34.3% is located in Greece, 32.7% in the UK and 33% in the Netherlands.

The findings are presented in the section below, starting with a general overview of the sample, followed by a more focused discussion on the variables and their correlations by country. Based on the literature on different expressions of shame, we would expect a high occurrence in the genderqueer community, but little is known of how this translates to self-gender identity interpretation and experiences of violence both in passive (as victim) and active (as perpetrator) ways.

4 RESULTS

4.1 *Sample Overview*

First, in the overall sample, in terms of self-concept (Fig. 1) and the impact of their gender identity on personal relationships and professional prospects, respondents claimed to have good and/or very good

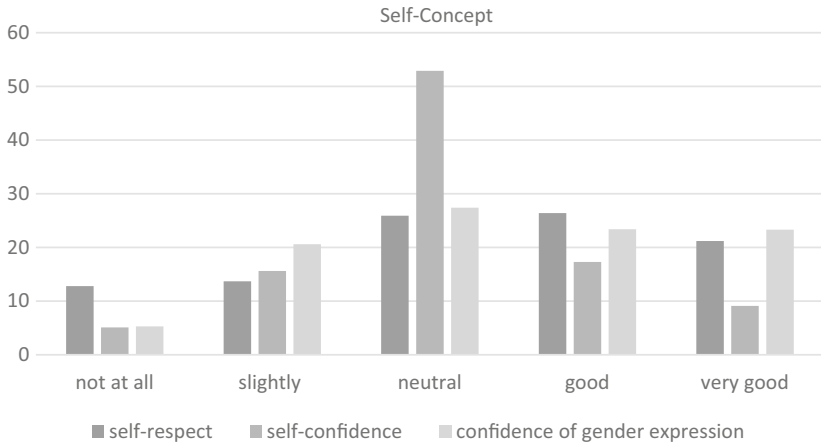


Fig. 1 Self-concept variables (%)

self-respect (47.6%) and also good and/or very good gender expression (46.7%), whereas 52.9% rated their self-confidence in a neutral state. When asked on how much gender influences their personal relations and professional prospects, respondents rated a stronger impact on personal relations (52.4% for family and 46.3% for sex life), whereas friendships and work prospects were less affected/concerned.

When it comes to experiences, the majority of the sample stated that sexism is present in their lives, with 52.4% admitting to feelings of anger towards the way the issue of gender is treated by society. On being embarrassed, self-conscious or ashamed, although a large proportion of the sample stated that they are not ashamed of their gender identity (46.3%), 48.5% of the overall sample admitted to having tried to conceal their gender identity to others. When asked about their experiences of other people's attitudes and behaviours, there seems to be less concern among the sample about how they are interpreted by others. However, when it comes to bodily shame, the picture changes: 57.3% claimed to be very much ashamed of their body and 52.9% very much worried about what people think of their appearance. The connection between shame and the body reflects strongly on the perception of one's gender just by the appearance, but also the way one perceives their body in relation to their gender when it comes to genderqueer individuals.

Additionally, 47.3% claimed to have negative perceptions of their abilities and feeling useless at times (47.3%), whereas 38.1% agree to have a negative attitude towards themselves and feeling a failure and 37.9% agree/strongly agree on not having much to be proud of. Finally, on their experience of violence while most people would not engage in actual violence, they have violent thoughts and at the same time can't/won't let these go. As results from Fig. 2 point out, 61.9% have experienced violence in some form in a passive way. And while 32.1% of the overall sample sometimes/very often have violent thoughts against people that hurt them, and 23.8% sometimes find it difficult to let go of the negative thoughts towards those people hurting them, only 9.5% stated that occasionally/sometimes would engage actively in a violent attitude against them.

The descriptive overview of the sample provides an interesting insight regarding the notions of gender and the self-concept, which overall is rated high, shame which is also strong among the participants, violence, which is rather less present, and self-esteem rated also high. However, clearer distinctions are required per case in order to point to any significant differences and patterns in different environments.

Hypothesis 1

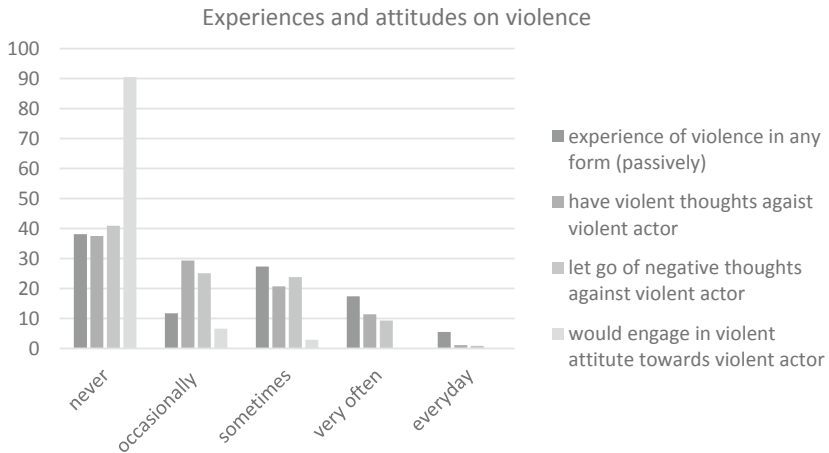


Fig. 2 Experiences and attitudes on violence (%)

Table 1 Selected correlations between self-concept and impact of gender identity on personal relations and professional prospects by country

	2 <i>self-confidence</i>		3 <i>confidence of gender expression</i>	
	<i>country</i>	<i>NL</i>	<i>UK</i>	<i>GR</i>
1 self-respect				
2 self-confidence				
3 confidence of gender expression		0.667**	0.503**	
4 personal relations		-0.819**	-0.578**	-0.912**
5 professional prospects				-0.862**

** $p < 0.05$

To test Hypothesis 1 correlations were conducted between self-concept and the impact of gender on personal relationships and professional prospects, pointing to some significant findings (see Table 1). In the case of the Netherlands (stronger) and the UK (moderate), there are two correlations: a negative correlation between self-confidence and gender having an impact on personal relationships; and a positive one between self-confidence and confidence of gender expression. In other words, the higher the self-confidence, the less the impact in personal relations, and the higher the confidence of gender expression. In the case of Greece, there are some noteworthy differences. There is a strong negative correlation between gender expression and personal relationships and also a similarly strong negative relation between confidence of gender expression and professional prospects.

As hypothesised, self-concept and the impact of gender on personal relationships in all three countries are negatively correlated, but only in Greece is self-concept additionally negatively correlated with professional prospects. Interestingly, among the three variables that define self-concept, the confidence of gender expression appears to have the strongest impact. This confidence though is not only determined by the individual themselves, but also from external factors as social and cultural attitudes, something that can explain the differentiation of results among the countries. For instance, reflecting on the anti-discrimination laws regarding LGBT rights, that only came in 2015 in Greece, and the strong culture on the conservative and traditional model of family, the outputs

point to a sceptical and less liberated approach in terms of a sense of freedom for gender expression.

Hypothesis 2

In order to test Hypothesis 2 correlations were conducted between shame and self-esteem, and shame and self-concept (Table 2). Looking at all three categories of characterological, bodily and behavioural shame, confidence of gender expression—i.e. the ability to...—arises to be again a key independent variable, but also there are variations across the three cases. Respondents from the Netherlands that rate their gender expression high, have lower levels of shame that relate to their gender, are more comfortable regarding their personality, both in reference to characterological shame, and feel comfortable in their own skin in terms of bodily shame.

As with the Netherlands, notwithstanding some differences in terms of characterological and bodily shame, in the case of the UK, stronger confidence of gender expression indicates lower levels of shame. In the case of Greece, bodily shame is negatively correlated with self-confidence and self-respect, while confidence of gender expression is strongly negatively correlated with behavioural shame. Again, in the case of Greece responses from the sample point out that the higher the three variables of self-concept, the lower the shame. Finally, in all three cases, there appears to be a significant relationship between shame and self-esteem. In the Netherlands (behavioural) and the UK (all three categories of shame) and in Greece (behavioural) self-esteem and shame correlate negatively.

As hypothesised, in all three cases self-concept and shame are negatively correlated and self-esteem and shame are also negatively correlated. And while in the case of self-concept the experiences of the participants are focused mainly on characterological and bodily shame, in the case of self-esteem all three categories of shame appear to be involved.

Hypothesis 3

Finally, in order to test Hypothesis 3, correlations were conducted between self-concept and violence, and shame and violence. In all three cases, it is evident that self-respect and confidence of gender expression correlate negatively with intention to engage in violent acts, meaning that people with higher self-respect and with stronger confidence on gender expression are less prone to engaging in violent acts. Self-respect also

Table 2 Selected correlations between self-concept, shame and self-esteem by country

	1 self-respect		2 self-confidence		3 confidence of gender expression		7 how interpreted by other people		8 perceptions towards oneself	
	Country	GR	GR	UK	NL	UK	GR	NL	GR	
1 self-respect										
2 self-confidence								-0.902**		
3 confidence of gender expression										
4 gender identity										
5 what sort of person people are										
6 comfortable on one's body										
7 how interpreted by other people										
8 perceptions towards oneself										
9 self-worth										

** $p < 0.05$, self-concept (variables 1–3) shame (variables 4–8) self-esteem (variable 9)

correlates negatively with seeking the punishment of the violent actor, in all three cases. And although there is no correlation connecting shame with the intention to engage in violence, there is a weak, but still worth mentioning link between shame (more specifically behavioural shame) and negative thoughts towards people that have hurt them: in the Netherlands ($r = -0.331, p < 0.05$), in the UK ($r = -0.345, p < 0.05$) and in Greece ($r = -0.401, p < 0.05$). Experiencing violence as a victim and engaging in violence as a perpetrator have no significant relation according to the data.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Earlier in this chapter, several theoretical perspectives on shame, self-esteem and violence were reviewed, all supporting the view that there is a higher likelihood of experiencing shame when perceived in a binary gender. Several results in the present study challenge the experience of shame itself due exactly to the change in the gender format/framework—meaning a non-binary context. First, our study embraced a new approach to gender, that moves away from the binary gender framework and the division of socially constructed understandings of masculinity and femininity (Butler, 1990). Then, in order to examine perceptions of shame, self-esteem, self-concept and violence in a comparative format, we selected three countries (Greece, the Netherlands and the UK). The theoretical models of Andrews et al. (2002) on shame and Rosenberg (1965) on self-esteem were applied within the genderqueer community, creating the new measure of self-concept. Finally, by building on the work of James Gilligan (1996), this study developed new measures on experiences of violence, in a dual format, both from the perspective of the victim and of the perpetrator.

Consistent with prior studies, the research highlighted a negative correlation between shame and self-esteem, but also put forward the emerging role of confidence of gender expression in relation to shame. Findings offer evidence that higher confidence in gender expression has a profound impact on diminishing shame, but also has a strong negative association with the prospect of gender affecting personal relationships and professional prospects. According to our data, the feeling of being able to express one's gender with confidence ultimately changes the way people experience personal relationships, because it removes a potential barrier;

but gender expression can also be associated with facing difficulties in one's professional prospects in adverse sociocultural contexts something that becomes very clear in the case of Greece.

Remarkably, while existing research points to a stronger occurrence of shame established in women, this correlation between gender and shame doesn't exist for genderqueer people, as the data does not highlight any significant correlation in relation to shame or self-esteem when it comes to self-concept on masculinity and femininity. This strengthens more the idea of gender beyond the notion of masculinity and femininity, at least in the genderqueer community that functions beyond the binary gender division. Regarding the relationship between shame and violence, the study points to a reluctance to engage in violent acts despite experiencing violence in a passive way in the role of a victim, and despite having negative thoughts towards the violent actor.

However, this study is based on self-reported data, therefore a would-be perpetrator would first have to admit to themselves, and then to the survey, that they have engaged in any kind of violence, which is a natural limitation of the method. Yet, this finding has an additional significance, as it can also connect shame with the by-product of mental health. Meaning, if people have to constantly live with negative thoughts against the perpetrator, this could feed their feelings of shame, and also it could have an adverse impact on their mental health, making the experience of violence in any form possible to affect one's mental health, something that could be a product of a future research. Additionally, despite hypothesis 3 being accepted, a stronger correlation between the variables was expected both in the case of violence and self-concept, and shame and violence, something that points to a need for further exploration on explaining this weak relation between these variables within the selected genderqueer community.

Reflecting on the outputs of this study, and despite having no clear association with self-esteem, confidence of gender expression appears to be a key variable when it comes to positive impact on minimising shame and lessening engagement in violence. From an LGBT rights perspective, this finding points to a stronger need for developing policies that will further support gender recognition.

While visibility is not a concept that was included in the current study it can provide an insightful layer when studied along with shame within a genderqueer community, as it is a group that is rather, in broader sense, often not "being seen". Taking this even further, and building up on

the findings of this study, visibility in combination with confidence of expressing oneself's gender can minimise any fear that may hold back a genderqueer individual to express and “be” themselves and therefore “be seen” of who they are, free of the fear of negative consequences or the fear of being punished for being “true” to themselves, due to what Sedgwick was referring to as tuning to the note of shame (2009) in relation to queerness. This can be applied not to a personal level and personal responsibility on interacting with one another, but also at a policy level, highlighting the consideration of respect, the prospects and well-being of genderqueer people.

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