

Gender and Adult Learning for Democracy, Inclusion and Citizenship
1st Call for Papers
Conference of the ESREA Research Network on
Gender and Adult Education
Faculty of Humanities, University of Huelva, Spain,
14th to 16th October 2026

Gender constitutes a central structuring principle within adult learning, influencing democratic life, social participation, and knowledge production. In global contexts characterized by democratic erosion, increasing inequalities, anti-gender movements, and the renewed politicization of citizenship, analysing adult learning through a gender perspective is both theoretically essential and politically urgent. Gender determines who speaks, who is heard, who learns, who teaches, and who is acknowledged as a legitimate political subject. Therefore, adult learning serves as a crucial arena in which gendered power relations are reproduced, contested, and potentially transformed.

Gender operates in conjunction with other social categories. The concept of intersectionality, introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw¹ (1989), demonstrates how gender intersects with race, class, sexuality, migration status, disability, and age to generate distinct experiences of oppression and privilege. Adult learners constitute a diverse population, occupying complex social positions that influence their access to education and their roles as citizens.

Simultaneously, intersectionality highlights the transformative potential of adult learning as a site for solidarity and coalition-building. Feminist popular education movements have historically established counter-public spaces where marginalized groups articulate collective identities and contest dominant narratives of citizenship. These spaces align with Paulo Freire's² (1970) dialogical pedagogy, which emphasizes critical consciousness and collective agency. When guided by intersectional feminist analysis, adult learning can promote both individual empowerment and broader structural critique and democratic mobilization.

Citizenship encompasses both legal status and lived practice, shaped by prevailing norms of belonging. Feminist scholarship demonstrates that dominant models of citizenship frequently rely on masculinized ideals such as autonomy, rationality, and public participation, while relegating care, dependency, and emotional labour—activities disproportionately performed by women—to the private sphere. This division has a significant influence on adult learning and shapes each individual's conception of citizenship and how it is exercised.

Educational opportunities are often designed around the assumption of the “ideal learner” as economically independent and temporally flexible. This perspective neglects caregiving responsibilities and other gendered forms of labour. As a result, women may face structural barriers that restrict their participation in democratic learning environments.

Contemporary backlash against gender equality demonstrates that struggles over gender are inherently linked to broader struggles over democracy. Adult learning serves as a site where competing visions of citizenship are debated and enacted. Gender-responsive adult education

¹ K. Crenshaw (1989). Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 139–167.

² P. Freire (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.

fosters critical media literacy, challenges misinformation, and establishes dialogical environments that counter authoritarian and exclusionary discourses.

Feminist approaches to adult learning, which foreground care, relationality, and interdependence, offer alternative conceptions of democracy and inclusion. Instead of viewing democracy solely as competitive participation among autonomous individuals, gender-aware pedagogies prioritize mutual recognition, ethical responsibility, and collective well-being.

Adopting a gender perspective necessitates more than the inclusion of women's experiences in existing curricula. It requires the transformation of epistemological assumptions, pedagogical relationships, and institutional structures. Feminist pedagogy emphasizes reflexivity concerning power dynamics between educators and learners, the validation of experiential knowledge, and the implementation of participatory governance within educational environments.

Adult learning initiatives that promote gender justice may include community-based leadership programmes for women, programmes to encourage men to challenge toxic masculinity, political education for marginalised gender groups, intergenerational feminist dialogue and digital activism training. However, meaningful transformation also requires institutional change, including gender-sensitive funding structures, inclusive policies, equitable representation in leadership, and acknowledgment of unpaid care responsibilities.

During periods of democratic uncertainty, adult learning grounded in feminist and intersectional theory offers essential resources for sustaining inclusive citizenship. Such approaches enable learners to critically examine normalized inequalities, envision alternative futures, and participate collectively in democratic renewal.

The conference aims to critically examine the influence of gender on adult learning within the contexts of democracy, inclusion, and citizenship. Contributions are sought that address theoretical, empirical, methodological, and practice-based perspectives on the transformative potential and limitations of adult education in promoting “gendered democracies”. Submissions may address (but are not limited to) the following themes:

1. Gendered Foundations of Democratic Education
2. Intersectionality and Differentiated Access to Adult Learning
3. Gender, Power, and Institutional Transformation
4. Gendered Adult Learning, Political Participation, and Activism
5. Gendered Work, Care, and Citizenship
6. Alternative Definitions of Gender Identities
7. Global and Comparative Perspectives of gender equality strategies and approaches to adult learning
8. Gender, migration and learning for community inclusion
9. Feminist approaches to anti-woke movements in democratic societies
10. Gender and citizenship among the elderly: implications for adult learning programmes
11. Digital inclusion and critical awareness of the potential for fake news
12. The challenges of artificial intelligence for adult learning

Proposals

Proposals are invited for papers, symposiums and round tables. The abstracts should be maximum 400 words long and include a title and 4 keywords. Please send a separate file with the author(s) name(s), institutional affiliation and contact details, indicating which authors are going to be present at the conference.

All abstracts should be submitted with on-line registration form (or by email to gal@dfing.uhu.es by 31th May of 2026. Acceptance of papers will be confirmed by 30th of June 2026.

If accepted for presentation, the final versions of papers (no more than 5.000 words including references) should be submitted by the 30th of September 2026, also via email. Please use Times New Roman, 12 and the APA (American Psychological Association) reference system, 7th edition.

Information for contributors

A paper is proposed and submitted in the form of an abstract by one person but other people can be named as co-authors in the abstract proposal.

Each participant can submit a maximum of two proposals (either as author or co-author).

The abstract must indicate which author will be presenting the paper. All those authors attending must register for the conference.

Further information on accommodation, travel to Huelva and tourist information will be available on the conference website.

Conference Fees

- ESREA members: 150 €
- Non-ESREA members: 195 €
- PhD Students: 95 €

Conference fee includes: conference materials, lunches, coffee-breaks, a light dinner (14th October).

The conference dinner (15th October) will be optional.

Conference Publication: A book to be edited after the conference via a double peer reviewed process or a thematic issue of a journal (to be decided).

Registration and Payment

Please look for the registration form in the webpage of the conference (will be available soon)

Payments should be made via bank transference (details to appear in the second call for papers and in the conference webpage).

ESREA Bursaries

ESREA offers up to three bursaries of up to 300 € each for PhD students attending the conference, provided they contribute with a paper. To be eligible to apply, students need to be ESREA members (individual or institutional membership). PhD students should declare their willingness to apply when sending the final version of paper. In this case, the email should be addressed to gal@dfing.uhu.es, but also to Joanna Ostrouch-Kamińska (joanna.ostrouch@uwm.edu.pl) and Cristina C. Vieira (vieira@fpce.uc.pt).

Students are to use the bursary money in expenses related to this conference (accommodation, flight, etc.) up to the limit of 300 €. ESREA will refund these expenses against the presentation of receipts. Applications or questions regarding the application procedure should be directed to ESREA Secretariat - Susanne Lattke: esrea_sec@die-bonn.de

Scientific Committee

Joanna Ostrouch-Kamińska (University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Poland)

Cristina C. Vieira (University of Coimbra, Portugal)

Emilio Lucio-Villegas Ramos (University of Sevilla, Spain)

Barbara Merrill (University of Warwick, UK)

María del Mar Gallego Durán (University of Huelva, Spain)

Pilar Cuder Domínguez (University of Huelva, Spain)

Auxiliadora Pérez Vides (University of Huelva, Spain)

Rocío Carrasco Carrasco (University of Huelva, Spain)

Organising Committee

Mar Gallego, Rocío Carrasco Carrasco, Rimian Vallejos Montaña, Petra Márquez Gento, Yulia

Ivashkina, Sarrah Ben Abdennebi, Vanessa Hidalgo Sánchez, Candela Rodríguez Bejarano.

About ESREA

ESREA is a European scientific society. It was established in 1991 to provide a European-wide forum for all researchers engaged in research on adult education and learning and to promote and disseminate theoretical and empirical research in the field. The European Society for Research on the Education of Adults promotes and disseminates theoretical and empirical research on the education of adults and adult learning in Europe through research networks, conferences and publications.

ESREA provides an important space for the (re)definition of adult education and learning in relation to research, theory, policy and practice to be reflected upon and discussed. A significant part of the periodic scientific debates is made through the meetings organised by ESREA research networks. ESREA also organised a triennial conference – the next will be in 2028, September – and runs the European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of the Adults (RELA - <https://www.rela.ep.liu.se/>). To learn more about ESREA, please follow the link: <https://www.esrea.org/>

The ESREA Research Network – Gender and Adult Education

This network aims to offer an opportunity for researchers interested in adult education and gender topics from all over Europe to enhance their understanding and their reflections within an international perspective. The network performs a crucial role in giving visibility and developing intellectual debates on the role of gender in adult education. Reports of research are discussed in terms of their theoretical aspects such as gendered learning, gender in higher education, gendered biographies, masculinities-femininities, gender in adult training, gender

and informal learning, but also in terms of their philosophical and methodological dimensions. The network meets every two years.

The first two conferences of the Network were held in Bochum (Germany, 1999) and Geneva (Switzerland, 2001). The third meeting took place in Wrocław (Poland, 2004) as an ESREA post-conference seminar, and next ones were organized in Geneva (Switzerland, 2005), Olsztyn (Poland, 2007), Hull (Great Britain, 2009), Montpellier (France, 2011), Coimbra (Portugal, 2013), Belgrade (2015), Koblenz (2017) and Faro (2022). As the result of those meetings and discussions seven books were published:

Dybbroe, B., & Ollagnier, E. (Eds.) (2003). *Challenging gender in lifelong learning: European perspectives*. Roskilde University Press.

Ostrouch, J., & Ollagnier, E. (Eds.) (2008). *Researching Gender in Adult Learning*, Peter Lang Publishing;

Ostrouch-Kamińska, J., Fontanini, C., & Gaynard, S. (Eds.) (2012). *Considering Gender in Adult Learning and in Academia: (In)Visible Act*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe DSW.

Ostrouch-Kamińska, J., & Vieira, C. C. (Eds.) (2015). *Private World(s). Gender and Informal Learning of Adults*. Sense Publishers.

Maksimović, M., Ostrouch-Kamińska, J., Popović, K., & Bulajić, A. (Eds.) (2016). *Contemporary Issues and Perspectives on Gender Research in Adult Education*. University of Belgrade.

Endepohls-Ulpe, M. & Ostrouch-Kamińska, J. (Eds.) (2019). *Gender – Diversity – Intersectionality (New) Perspectives in Adult Education*. Waxmann.

Vieira, C. C., & Ostrouch-Kamińska, J. (Eds.) (2025). *Gender and Adult Education Research in the Face of Social and Cultural Changes: (New) Challenges of Contemporary Times*. Brill.