



1st International Conference on
Strong Blended Families
UNDERSTANDING WHAT WORKS

6-7 FEBRUARY 2025

VALLETTA, MALTA

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

ORGANISERS



L-Università
ta' Malta



The Malta Foundation
for the Wellbeing of Society

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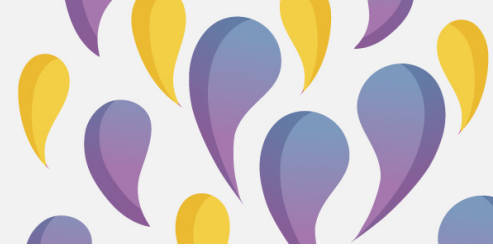


THE
FARSONS
FOUNDATION

CONFERENCE MANAGEMENT



SYMVOLI



Programme Outline

Thursday, 6 February 2025

9.00-9.30	REGISTRATION		
AULA PRIMA HALL			
9.30-9.40	WELCOME ADDRESS		
9.40-10.00	OPENING SPEECHES		
10.00-10.45	THE MALTA STUDY		
10.45-11.05	REACTIONS		
11.05-11.15	Q&A		
11.15-11.45	COFFEE BREAK (GROUND FLOOR)		
11.45-12.45	KEYNOTE SPEECH 1		
12.45-13.00	GROUP REFLECTION		
13.00-14.00	LUNCH BREAK (GROUND FLOOR)		
	AULA PRIMA HALL	MEETING ROOM 2	MEETING ROOM 3
14.00-15.45	ORAL SESSION 1	ORAL SESSION 2	ORAL SESSION 3
AULA PRIMA HALL			
15.45-16.45	KEYNOTE SPEECH 2 (online)		
16.50-17.00	CLOSING OF DAY 1		
17.00	NETWORKING RECEPTION		

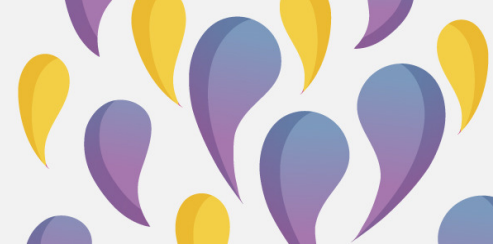
Friday, 7 February 2025

AULA PRIMA HALL			
9.00-9.15	WELCOME ADDRESS		
9.15-10.45	PANEL		
10.45-11.15	COFFEE BREAK / OPENING OF POSTER VIEWING (GROUND FLOOR)		
	AULA PRIMA HALL	MEETING ROOM 2	MEETING ROOM 3
11.15-12.45	WORKSHOP 1	WORKSHOP 2	WORKSHOP 3
12.45-13.45	LUNCH BREAK (GROUND FLOOR)		
AULA PRIMA HALL			
13.45-14.45	KEYNOTE SPEECH 3 (online)		
	AULA PRIMA HALL	MEETING ROOM 2	MEETING ROOM 3
14.45-16.15	WORKSHOP 4	WORKSHOP 5	WORKSHOP 6
AULA PRIMA HALL			
16.15-17.00	ROUND TABLE		
17.00	BEST POSTER AWARD AND CLOSING REMARKS		

INSTRUCTIONS FOR WIFI ACCESS

Event Name: 1st International Conference on Strong Blended Families 6.2.2025 – 7.2.2025

1. Connect to 'CSC-UOM-WIFI' wifi
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Detailed Programme

THURSDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2025

9.00-9.30

REGISTRATION

9.30-9.40

WELCOME ADDRESS | AULA PRIMA HALL

by Professor Suzanne Piscopo, University of Malta, Conference Co-convener

9.40-10.00

OPENING SPEECHES | AULA PRIMA HALL

by Her Excellency Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, President Emeritus and President of the Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society

by Professor Alfred J Vella, Rector University of Malta

10.00-11.15

THE MALTA STUDY | AULA PRIMA HALL

10.00-10.45

The Malta Blended Families Study

Angela Abela, *Professor of Child and Family Studies, Faculty for Social Wellbeing, University of Malta, Malta*

Suzanne Piscopo, *Professor of Home Economics, Faculty of Education, University of Malta, Malta*

Sue Vella, *Associate Professor of Social Policy, Faculty for Social Wellbeing, University of Malta, Malta*

Allison Zammit Said, *Clinical Psychologist and Family Therapist, Visiting Lecturer, Faculty for Social Wellbeing, University of Malta, Malta*

10.45-11.05

Reactions to Presentation by Panel Experts

-Role play of participating children in the study (video clip)

-Further perspectives by panel of experts.

Dr Charles Coleman, Prof Sue Vella, Allison Zammit Said and Prof Suzanne Piscopo

11.05-11.15

Q&A with the audience

11.15-11.45

COFFEE BREAK



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11.45-12.45

KEYNOTE SPEECH 1 | AULA PRIMA HALL

11.45-12.30

Surviving and Thriving in “Blended Families”: A Clinician’s View of What Works and What Doesn’t for Creating Strong Stepfamilies

Patricia L. Papernow, *Director of the Institute for Stepfamily Education, USA*

12.30-12.45

Q&A with the audience

12.45-13.00

GROUP REFLECTION

Interactive poll: Participants share their thoughts and perceptions

13.00-14.00

LUNCH BREAK

14.00-15.45

PARALLEL ORAL PRESENTATIONS

SESSION 1 | AULA PRIMA HALL

What Works in Remarrying and Repartnering in Stepfamilies (online)

Lawrence Ganong, *University of Missouri, USA*

Marilyn Coleman, *University of Missouri, USA*

Caroline Sanner, *Virginia Tech University, USA*

Stepfamily Assessment Tools

Brian Higginbotham, *Utah State University, USA*

Francesca Adler-Baeder, *Auburn University, USA*

Yasumitsu Jikihara, *Osaka University, Japan*

Carina Santos, Mariana Martins, *University of Porto, Portugal*

Shinji Nozawa, *Meiji Gakuin University, Japan*

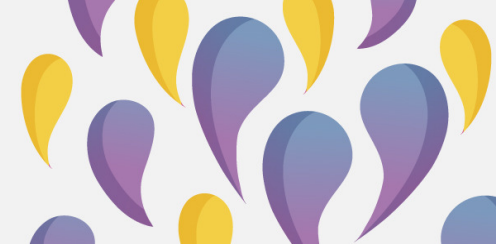
Marital Relationships in Blended Families living together or separately from children from Previous Marriages

Elena Chebotareva, *Moscow State University of Psychology and Education, HSE University, RUDN University, Russia*

Liya Sudakova, *Moscow State University of Psychology and Education, Russia*

Patterns of Supracoparenting in Stepfamilies: A Qualitative Analysis of Coparenting Teams

Marion Adamiste, Marie-Christine Saint-Jacques, Sylvie Drapeau, *Université Laval, Canada*



SESSION 2 | MEETING ROOM 2

Blended Families, Chosen Families, Institutional Families – new templates of ‘family’ in mental health services

Maeve Malley, Jimmy Tse, Hanyan Wang, Kyra Tal, Naureen Whittinger, Lucy Hickeyja, *Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust, United Kingdom*

Yours, Mine and Ours: A Resilient and Systemic Perspective of a Blended Family

Martina Saliba, *Systemic Family Psychotherapist, Malta*

Emotions as Barriers and Gateways to Learning in Students from Families Transitioning to a Blended Family Structure: A Scoping Review

Rosienne Camilleri, Erika Galea, *University of Malta, Malta*

SESSION 3 | MEETING ROOM 3

Does Joint Physical Custody Harm the Stepfather-Child Relationship?

Anja Steinbach, *University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany*

Lara Augustijn, *Rogator AG, Germany*

Vera del Bel, *University of Cologne, Germany*

Change in Roles and Responsibilities of Stepparents Over Time

Marie Christine Saint-Jacques, Hans Ivers, Nathalie Ste-Marie, *Université Laval, Canada*

Experiences of Young People and (Step)Parents living in Blended Families: a Dutch Perspective

Janneke Metselaar, Magda Hengst, *NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands*

Claudia Vrijhof, Mariska Klein Velderman, *Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research, TNO, Child Health Department, Netherlands*

Conjugal Relationships Among Québec Stepparents: What Have We Learned Over Time?

Caroline Robitaille, Nathalie Ste-Marie, *Université Laval, Canada*

15.45-16.45 KEYNOTE SPEECH 2 (ONLINE) | AULA PRIMA HALL

15.45-16.30

Turning Points in Finding What Works: Communication to Create Positive Stepfamily Relationships

Dawn O. Braithwaite, *Willa Cather Professor of Communication Studies Emeritus, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, USA*

15.30-16.45

Q&A with the audience

16.50-17.00 CLOSING OF DAY 1 | AULA PRIMA HALL

17.00

NETWORKING RECEPTION



FRIDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 2025

9.00-9.15

WELCOME ADDRESS | AULA PRIMA HALL

by Professor Sue Vella, University of Malta, Conference Co-Convener

9.15-10.45

PANEL | AULA PRIMA HALL

Building Strong Step-Families Around the World

Moderated by Patricia Papernow

U.S.A and INTERNATIONAL

Smart Steps

Francesca Adler-Baeder, *Auburn University, Alabama, USA*

Brad van-Eeden-Morefield, *Montclair State University, New Jersey*

Brian Higginbotham, *Utah State University*

FINLAND

Supli (Stepfamily Association of Finland)

Heidi Karvonen, *Stepfamily Association of Finland, Finland*

CANADA

Journey Counseling

Charles Coleman, *Registered Psychologist and Clinic Director, Canada*

Amy Corkett, *Registered Psychologist, Canada*

SINGAPORE

PPIS Vista Sakinah Center for Remarriage and Stepfamilies

Mardiana binte Mohd Isa, *Senior Social Worker, Vista Sakinah, Singapore*

Azita Abdul Aziz, *Senior Director, PPIS Family Services, Singapore*

Kamariah Yusoff, *Centre Manager, PPIS INSPIRASI, Singapore*

DENMARK

Institute for Stepfamilies

Janne Leth Førgaard, *Family Counsellor, Edu-Therapy Specialist™, Couples Therapist, Stepfamily Coach, Denmark*

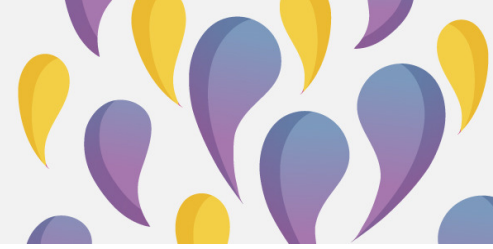
BELGIUM

Barbara Lavrysen, *Clinical Psychologist, Couples and Family Therapist, Trainer, and Supervisor at Context UPC, and staff member of the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, both at KU Leuven, Belgium*

ISRAEL

Stepcouple Relationships During an Ongoing War and the Unique Challenges in Ultra-Orthodox Stepfamilies

Sigal Kaplan, *Family Counsellor, specializing in blended families, lecturer on divorce and stepfamilies at Kibbutzim College, Tel Aviv, consultant to the Ogen Project, a school-based mentoring programme for children in divorced families, Israel*



10.45-11.15 COFFEE BREAK / OPENING OF POSTER VIEWING

Poster_01 | **Lessons Learned from a Dual-Delivery Format Stepfamily Education Program**
Kay Bradford, Brian Higginbotham, Joshua Turner, Esra Sahin, *Utah State University, USA*

Poster_02 | **A Multidisciplinary Approach to Understanding Stepfamilies: Longitudinal Study of Separated Parents and Stepfamilies in Quebec (LSPSQ)**
Marie-Christine Saint-Jacques, Elisabeth Godbout, Caroline Robitaille, *Université Laval, Canada*
Amandine Baude, *Université de Bordeaux, France*

Poster_03 | **Stepfamily Relationship Quality and Youth Well-Being Over Time: Stages of Adolescence as a Moderating Influence**
Todd Jensen, *University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, USA*

Poster_04 | **A Latent Trajectory Analysis of Stepfamily Education**
Kay Bradford, Brian Higginbotham, *Utah State University, USA*
Bryan Spuhler, *University of Southern Mississippi, USA*

Poster_05 | **An Overview of Research Findings from the Utah Remarriage Quality and Stability Project**
J.Scott Crapo, Joshua Turner, Kay Bradford, Brian Higginbotham, *Utah State University, USA*

Poster_06 | **Profiles of Coparenting Dynamics in Stepfamilies: The Stepparents' Perspective**
Marion Adamiste, Tamarha Pierce, Hans Ivers, *Université Laval, Canada*
Diane Dubeau, *Université du Québec en Outaouais, Canada*

Poster_07 | **Relationship Dynamics between New Couples in Blended Families and Their Previous Partners: a Case Study from in North Macedonia**
Avirovic Bundalevska, *University St. Cyril and Methodius, North Macedonia*

Poster_08 | **Blended Families in North Macedonia: Exploring New Relationship Dynamics**
Angelka Keskinova, *University St. Cyril and Methodius, North Macedonia*

11.15-12.45

PARALLEL WORKSHOPS

WORKSHOP 1 | AULA PRIMA HALL

Unleashing the Potential of Stepparent-Child Relationships to Promote Child Well-Being and the Functioning of Blended Families
Todd Jensen, *University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, USA*

WORKSHOP 2 | MEETING ROOM 2

Effective intervention designing through co-creation strategies – case StepApp-intervention
Heidi Karvonen, Kirsi Heikinheimo, *Stepfamily Association of Finland, Finland*



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WORKSHOP 3 | MEETING ROOM 3

Stepfamilies, not second class, just different. Do we need new maps for new terrain?

Bente Barstad, *Modum Bad Psychiatric Hospital and Course and Competence Center, Norway*

Søren Marcussen, *Center for Family Development, Denmark*

Glenn Ringdal, *Modum Bad Course and Competence Center, Norway*

12.45-13.45

LUNCH BREAK

13.45-14.45 KEYNOTE SPEECH 3 (ONLINE) | AULA PRIMA HALL

13.45-14.30

Research on What Works in Childrearing in Stepfamilies

Lawrence Ganong, *Emeritus Professor of Human Development and Family Science and Nursing, University of Missouri, USA*

14.30-14.45

Q&A with the audience

14.45-16.15

PARALLEL WORKSHOPS

WORKSHOP 4 | AULA PRIMA HALL

From Struggles to Strength: Navigating Stepfamily Dynamics with Attachment-Based Family Therapy (ABFT)

Tara Santens, Leen Van Vlierberghe, Barbara Lavrysen, *KU Leuven, Belgium*

WORKSHOP 5 | MEETING ROOM 2

Administering a Stepfamily Education Initiative: What works?

Brian Higginbotham, Kay Bradford, Phillip Estes, Kelly Kendall, Leslie Cup, *Utah State University, USA*

Francesca Adler-Baeder, *Auburn University, USA*

WORKSHOP 6 | MEETING ROOM 3

A Phenomenological Study of the Challenges, Strengths, Resilience Factors, and Successes as Defined by Blended Couples in Stepfamilies Who Have Been Married Longer Than Five Years

Charles Coleman, *University of Calgary, Canada*

16.15-17.00

ROUND TABLE | AULA PRIMA HALL

Implications for research, practice and policy

17.00

BEST POSTER AWARD AND CLOSING REMARKS | AULA PRIMA HALL

INVITATION!

Announcing a new

INTERNATIONAL NETWORK FOR BLENDED FAMILIES.

If interested to JOIN or for MORE INFORMATION

please contact Prof Angela Abela on

angela.abela@um.edu.mt