**University of Leicester**

**Future 50 PhD Scholarship**

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| **Project Reference** | LAW Maine |

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| **Additional Supervisor** |  |

**Section 2 – *Project Information***

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| **Project Title** | Valuing Difference: Conversion Therapy in an International Human Rights Framework |
| **Project Highlights:** | 1. | Exploration of the international human rights frameworks concerning the practice of ‘conversion therapy’ |
| 2. | Consideration of feminist and queer theoretical perspectives on the practice and its ramifications |
| 3. | The effectiveness of these frameworks and legal ‘bans’ on them will also be assessed, particularly important as many countries (including the UK Government) are currently introducing proposals outlaw the practice. |
| **Project Summary**  |
| This project seeks to critically examine, through a queer feminist lens, the relationship between human rights law and conversion therapy. Conversion therapy is a term that describes a broad range of practices that target LGBTQI+ persons with the specific aim of effecting change in their non-conforming sexual orientation or gender identity. The practice is often, but not always, associated with religious or social beliefs that strongly reject the value and legitimacy of queer lives. Growing awareness of the harm caused by conversion therapy has in turn raised pressing questions about whether and how the law should respond to it. At an international level, UN Human Rights Council’s Special Procedures and the European Parliament have called on States to take action. Bans or partial bans have been introduced in several states. The UK Government is in the process developing legislation partially banning conversion therapy for LGB people, excluding trans therapy from such a ban. This project plans to tackle LGBTQI+ conversion therapy, and address the distinct challenges the LGB and the T raise. The various practices of conversion therapy potentially implicate a number of human rights, not least the right to freedom from torture, inhuman and degrading treatment; the right to privacy; freedom of thought, conscience and religion and the rights of the child. There has however been limited academic engagement with this important area. This project aims to identify and chart the rapidly developing international human rights norms and standards that have been recognised as being applicable to conversion therapy. Looking across the various relevant international and regional human rights instruments, the project will set out the relevant standards that have so far been adopted with respect to the practice. Important questions to be answered include: what practices of conversion therapy violate the prohibition of physical and psychological harm (torture, inhuman and degrading treatment) in international human rights law?; what is the scope of state responsibility with respect to conversion therapy?; with respect to non-absolute rights, such as the right to private life, what is the appropriate balance of rights (e.g. the right to religious freedom)?  |