



SWEDISH
COLLEGIUM
for ADVANCED STUDY

REGULAR SESSION INFORMATION

Session: Gender and Modernity: Rethinking Power and Identity in the Global Arena II

Session Convener(s): Sofia Aboim, University of Lisbon; Pedro Vasconcelos, Lisbon University Institute

Chair: Pedro Vasconcelos, Lisbon University Institute

Comments: -

I) *Sociology of Rape, Stigma and Exclusion*

Sapna K Sangra, University of Jammu, Jammu and Kashmir

II) *Gay Muslim Men. Gender and Sexual Orientation in a South African Muslim Community*

Elsje Bonthuys, University of the Witwatersrand

Natasha Erlank, University of Johannesburg

III) *The Gender Representation in Professional Top Position: The Personal Home Page*

Simonetta Bisi, Sapienza University, Rome

Marcella Pompili Pagliari, Sapienza University, Rome

IV) *Power and Inequality in Brazil: Challenges of Race and Gender*

Maria Inácia D'Ávila Neto, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro

Cláudio São Thiago Cavas, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro

Gabriel de Sena Jardim, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro

V) *Modernity and Gender Inequality in India- Looking at New forms of Inequality in Indian Urban Space*

Archana Prasad, University of Delhi

ABSTRACTS

Session description

Over the past few decades, a number of crucial challenges led to further reflection about the uncontested supremacy of both western modernity and a male-dominated gender order, thus shaking the traditional linkages between hegemony and subordination. Bearing this in mind, we aim, in this session, to contribute for a critical view on the impact of economic transnationalism and cultural globalization upon the power upholding the continued hegemony of a gender order still marked by various forms of subjection, even if these are increasingly plural and complex. We aim to bring together two main topics of research. First, it is necessary to locate gender relations in an increasingly globalized world, where new collective subjectivities are being built at the same time that new forms of power recreate the linkages between domination and otherness, often hiding the resilient foundations of a number of processes that perpetuate both male (or at least that of a certain male) and Western supremacy. Secondly, it is also important to reflect upon the historical construction of modernity itself as an imperialist project that is most commonly presented as a degendered endeavour. As a result, the construction of white Western men as dominant subjects is deeply connected to the ways through which a certain Eurocentric vision of modernity has been centre-stage to perpetuate key forms and processes of gender differentiation, both structurally and symbolically. We welcome papers that challenge binary dichotomies (e.g. traditional and modern) and seek to develop an approach combining the analysis of gender relations and identities with a critical view of modernity. A wide range of topics are of interest to this discussion: from practices to values in different corners of the globe, from empirical papers to theoretical discussions. We particularly encourage papers that may contribute to the questioning of hegemonic categories of power and identity (e.g. the 'West', the white man).

Papers

I) *Sociology of Rape, Stigma and Exclusion*

Sapna K Sangra, University of Jammu, Jammu and Kashmir

An increasing interest in 'asymmetric' warfare for the last two decades has led to the focus on war rape. In war rape, the enemy soldier attacks a civilian (not a combatant), a woman (not another male soldier) with prime aim of inflicting trauma and thus destroying family ties and group solidarity within the enemy camp. Feminist theorists too argue that rape is a manifestation of domination and power asserted towards violently degrading women and relegating them to a position of social, political and economic subservience. Rape, as a weapon of war encompasses the body, gender, religion and psyche. The issue of rapes of Kashmiri women by Indian security forces during the insurgency that broke out in the valley during 1989-1990 has been writ large. Using Kashmir conflict as a case, the paper aims at exploring how gender differences and religious commitments can be used in war rapes as an instrument of traumatizing not just the women in question but also their families and ultimately the communities in which they live.

II) *Gay Muslim Men. Gender and Sexual Orientation in a South African Muslim Community*

Elsje Bonthuys, University of the Witwatersrand

Natasha Erlank, University of Johannesburg

This small-scale study of gay Muslim men in Johannesburg draws parallels between community responses towards the respondents in the South African Muslim community and the literature on attitudes in similar religious communities worldwide. These relate particularly to the common 'will not to know' about deviant sexual behaviour

and the role of marriage in simultaneously constraining and allowing expressions of same-sex desire. Violent family and community reaction to their sons' sexual orientation seem to be rare and more frightening in anticipation than in reality. Most of our gay informants were satisfied to live within these norms of discretion and not to flout their sexuality in an open way. Others were frustrated with their inability to integrate their sexual orientation into their daily lives. However, there are also differences, most notably with Muslims in Middle Eastern societies. We have found no evidence of sexual relationships between men and boys, nor of a widespread acceptance of such relationships. We have found limited evidence for an exclusively penetrative/receptive dichotomy in sexual practices and in the modes of establishing contact with other men who have similar sexual preferences.

III) *The Gender Representation in Professional Top Position: The Personal Home Page*

Simonetta Bisi, Sapienza University, Rome

Marcella Pompili Pagliari, Sapienza University, Rome

Although still in the minority, the role played by the women in the public sphere has been growing during the last decades. Many studies and researches have investigated the existence of gender differences in the power elite. We know that no phenomenon can be isolated from its historical and social context, and the influence of the dominant culture certainly peers from the behavior and the communication styles of the *female elite*. Considering one's "presence" in the web as a social public activity, it requires like in the other spheres of the social life, some information about oneself: who he/she is, what he/she does, his/her background, his/her image and so on. When the Personal Home Page represents a person in his/her public role, with how much freedom is the personal identity displayed by the author? How important are the social biases, especially for a woman? Which choice prevails in the female representation of her public self: authority (in order to adequate herself to the male stereotypes of power) or seduction (to adequate herself to the social construction of the female body)? Can the homepage be transformed from a place of representation of one's identity in a representation of the institutions' ideologies? May it curb the personal autonomy? Do the women in a top position internalize the ideology conveyed by the institutions which they belong to, or do they reveal a new "female representation model"? Is it possible to bring out elements of social change in freedom of utterance and creativity of the women's PHP? The empirical investigation rests on a content analysis of university professors' and politic leaders' PHP, in order to explain the construction of the women image in the public contest.

IV) *Power and Inequality in Brazil: Challenges of Race and Gender*

Maria Inácia D'Ávila Neto, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro

Cláudio São Thiago Cavas, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro

Gabriel de Sena Jardim, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro

In colonial Brazil there was an intricate complex of relations based on authority and domination involving the seigneurial world. We could label the variations in existing power as "*domestic power*", "*seigneurial power*" and "*aristocratic power*" (Fernandes, 1976). We find in this colonial world the origins of our patriarchal system, where the patriarch's authority was incontestable, in the family, women, children and slaves domain. The black woman was destined to provide services, including sexual favors. In this colonial world of patriarchal authority were formed, simultaneously, the exaltation to the virginal woman that is reflected in the devotion to the Virgin Mary associated to a mythical or magical power to colored people, and especially to their females, who are known as *mulatas*. This continues to be prominent today in the cultural tourism industry. The "*patricentric*" aspects revealed the political power, but the power imputed to women is the mythical or magic power, i.e. it belongs to the imaginary sphere. The body, in the same way as the

language, is also a site of expression of power. These powers, however, are not of political order, and also remain in the sphere of the imaginary, like a kind of identity depository, confining the woman in a body substance, disciplined by the imposed use of her sexuality, naturalizing tasks and roles arising out of one or another acception of that modelization. The post-colonial and subaltern studies offer a view of a hybrid culture that presents new arrangements of power to women in Brazilian culture (Boaventura Santos, 2006).

V) *Modernity and Gender Inequality in India- Looking at New forms of Inequality in Indian Urban Space*

Archana Prasad, University of Delhi

Gender as a concept has been used in sociological literature to understand the power relation between male and female. Most literature on gender focuses on the approach to inequality based on biological, social and cultural differences and the means and ways to decrease these differences. This has been theoretically termed as gender inequality. A large number of indicators have utilized for conceptualizing gender inequality. Some of these indicators are related to the level of literacy, economic condition, lack of awareness, mobility and so on. These indicators have more or less led to the development of a framework whereby gender inequality is dependent on the socio-economic status of society. Going by this framework, the commonsensical understanding is that gender inequality is far more prevalent in areas having low education, poor economic conditions, backwardness and so on. These attributes are also considered as indicators modernity. (this can no doubt be debated, the understanding of modernity in itself is complex but the aim here is not to debate concept of modernity but examine that relation between modernity and gender inequality). Stated in different words it means societies lacking the parameters of modernity have greater level of gender inequality. In the Indian context the relation between gender and modernity further gets entangled in the nexus between rural-urban, global and local and tradition-modern. And therefore it is assumed that gender inequality exists more in rural, local and traditional society. Such arguments then see gender and modernity as having a direct causal relation. Indian society is undergoing economy, social and political change or becoming modern and therefore gender inequality is on the decrease. Such generalizations have been result of sociological theories coming mostly from west and reflected in the class room. My contention is that such an understanding of gender inequality is problematic specially in the context of India where the power relation between male and female is still imbalanced and the notion of gender empowerment among us is partially illusioned. The aim of the paper is twofold, firstly to argue that modernity is not always positive in the sense that it does not on its own lead to gender equality and secondly the understanding of gender inequality has to be both at the level of the society and individuals. The argument would then be that modernity certainly does lead to change in terms of better access to education, improvement in economic condition and increased awareness of own right. But then along with that individuals have to be ready to incorporate that change in everyday life. The paper argues that modernity has not led to decrease in gender inequality but only content and form inequality has changed. Some of the areas that need to be examined are economic independence, work, sexuality, freedom and mobility. The paper focuses on urban spaces of modernity in India to explore areas in which gender inequality manifests itself though different from the past. The significance of the paper is to arrive at new indicators of inequality prevalent in modern-urban space. To arrive at a holistic understanding of gender equality implies looking at both societal development and at individual's autonomy and identity.