

# Gendering Excellence – GEXcel

Towards a European Center of Excellence in  
Transnational and Transdisciplinary Studies of

- Changing Gender Relations
- Intersectionalities
- Embodiment





GEXcel Work in Progress Report  
Volume I

Proceedings from  
GEXcel Kick-off Conference

December 2007

Edited by:

*Stine Adrian, Malena Gustavson, Nina Lykke*

The publication of this report has been funded with the support of the Swedish Research Council: Centers of gender excellence program

GEXcel Work in Progress Report Volume I:  
Proceedings from GEXcel kick-off conference

Copyright © GEXcel and the authors 2007

Print & Layout: Tomas Hägg, LiU-tryck, Linköping University

Tema Genus Report Series No. 5: 2007 – LiU  
CFS Report Series No. 6: 2007 – ÖU

ISBN 978-91-7393-998-0  
ISSN 1650-9056

ISBN 978-91-7668-569-3  
ISSN 1103-2618

Addresses:

[www.genderexcel.org](http://www.genderexcel.org)

Institute of Thematic Gender Studies, LiU-ÖU  
- an inter-university institute, located at:

Department of Gender Studies

Linköping University  
SE 581 83 LINKÖPING  
Sweden

&

Center for Feminist Social Studies (CFS)  
Örebro University  
SE 701 82 Örebro  
Sweden

# CONTENTS

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION <i>Nina Lykke</i>	7
CHAPTER I CENTRE OF GENDER EXCELLENCE, GENDERING EXCELLENCE – GEXCEL <i>Nina Lykke</i>	11
PRESENTATIONS OF GEXCEL RESEARCH THEMES, 2007-2009	17
CHAPTER 2 THEME 1: GENDER, SEXUALITY AND GLOBAL CHANGE <i>Anna G. Jónasdóttir</i>	19
CHAPTER 3 THEME 2: DECONSTRUCTING THE HEGEMONY OF MEN AND MASCULINITIES: CONTRADICTIONS OF ABSENCE <i>Jeff Hearn</i>	23
CHAPTER 4 THEME 3: DISTINCTIONS AND AUTHORIZATIONS <i>Anita Göransson, Linköping University</i>	37
CHAPTER 5 THEME 4-5: SEXUAL HEALTH, EMBODIMENT AND EMPOWERMENT. BRIDGING EPISTEMOLOGICAL GAPS <i>Nina Lykke &amp; Barbro Wijma</i>	47
OTHER CONFERENCE PAPERS FROM GEXCEL KICK-OFF CONFERENCE	61
CHAPTER 6 GENDER, DIVERSITY AND TRANSNATIONAL CITIZENSHIP <i>Birte Siim, Aalborg University</i>	63

CHAPTER 7	
WOMEN'S COMMONALITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE	77
<i>Elzbieta H. Oleksy</i>	
CHAPTER 8	
THEORIZING GENDER, SEXUALITY AND POLITICS IN AN ERA OF GLOBAL CHANGE	87
<i>Kathleen B. Jones</i>	
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS	107

## Editorial Introduction

*Nina Lykke*

This report is the first in a series, which we plan to publish in order to document work-in-progress of the newly started Centre of Gender Excellence: GEXcel - Gendering Excellence: Towards a European Centre of Excellence in Transnational and Transdisciplinary Studies of Changing Gender Relations, Intersectionalities and Embodiment.

GEXcel is an international research centre and a meeting place for excellent gender researchers and feminist scholars from all over the world. It is funded by the Swedish Research Council's Centre of Gender Excellence program, 2007-2011. GEXcel will carry out new transdisciplinary and transnational research on changing gender relations, intersectionalities and embodiment, based on cross-national research teams. GEXcel research is planned to result in many different kinds of scholarly publications - books, journal articles, e-research publications etc. With GEXcel research activities and our publications, we hope to enter into dialogue with a broad, transdisciplinary and international community of scholars of all academic ages, but with a shared interest in feminist theorizing and intersectional gender research. Moreover, we hope to be able to reach out to broader publics - activists, NGOs, established policy-makers and others who just want to know more about intersectional gender research and current processes of sociocultural transformations of gender relations and other interrelated power differentials.

As we strongly believe in dialogues with research communities as well as with broader publics, we think it is important not only to publish our results *after* the research process is finalized. This is, of course, crucial. But to generate dialogues among many different kind of researchers and between researchers and the broader public, we also think that the opening of windows to the research process, for example, through publication of *work-in-progress* reports such as this one can be useful. Work-in-progress may invite to discussion and debate in other ways than

more final research reports, and we welcome dialogues at all levels of the research process.

The report presents the papers from GEXcel's kick-off conference, which was held May 3-5, 2007. The purpose of the conference was to present GEXcel, the idea, the ambitions and the research themes for 2007-2009 and to receive comments, new ideas and response from members of GEXcel's international advisory board as well as from the broader gender research milieus at GEXcel's two local Swedish campuses in Linköping and Örebro. App. 30 participants took part in the conference, among others three members of GEXcel's international advisory board, Prof. Birte Siim, Denmark, Prof. Elzbieta Oleksy, Poland, and Prof. Em. Kathleen B. Jones, USA. All three gave papers, published as the last three chapters (6-8) of this work-in-progress report. In addition to the lectures by the guests from abroad, the five professors from Linköping and Örebro who are going to chair the five first GEXcel research themes and teams gave speeches, unfolding their ideas and presenting the research plans for the themes. These presentations are included as chapter 1-5 in this report. We hope that the report, against this background, will be a useful working document among others for coming GEXcel fellows.

In different ways, the conference and the chapters in this report stress what is defined as important pivots of GEXcel research and its approaches to changing gender relations. In particular, the key words: intersectionalities, transnationality, embodiment and transdisciplinarity, were highlighted.

GEXcel's overall *working definitions* of its key concepts and thematic pivots were presented by GEXcel Director *Nina Lykke* in her overall introduction to GEXcel, its scientific starting points, ambitions, short- and long-term visions (*Chapter 1*).

The importance of *transnational* approaches to gender relations were strongly underlined by several speakers. In the introduction to theme 1, *Gender, Sexuality and Global Change*, *Anna G. Jónasdóttir* (*Chapter 2*) argued for a new take on sexuality in its relationship to gender. She stressed the intertwinement of political economy and political sexuality, and she underlined the importance of global perspectives. The theoretical need for a feminist theorizing of gender in cross-cultural, historical materialist and "truly international" perspective was also underpinned by member of the international advisory board and co-organiser of Theme 1 *Kathleen B. Jones* (*Chapter 8*). *Jeff Hearn* (*Chapter 3*) introduced GEXcel research theme 2, *Deconstructing the Hegemony of Men and Masculinities: Contradictions of Absence*. He discussed the concept of "hegemony" and the ways in which it has been used in critical studies of men and masculinities. He

argued for a shift of focus from “hegemonic masculinity” to “the hegemony of men”. Via the concept of “transpatriarchies” he also underlined that the analysis of hegemonies should go beyond a nation-state defined perspective to systematic integration of transnational outlooks.

The necessity of exploring and thoroughly reflecting on the implications of looking at gender relations in *intersectional* perspectives was another central point. It was forcefully underlined that it is not enough just to take such perspectives for granted or handle them as approaches which can be “added on”. Along these lines, *Anita Göransson (Chapter 4)* made an introduction to GEXcel research theme 3, *Distinctions and Authorizations*, discussing how intersections of gender, class and ethnicity work together in specific ways in the construction of power elites in society. Looking at different kinds of political debates on gender, diversity and citizenship, *Birte Siim (Chapter 6)*, member of GEXcel’s international advisory board, stressed how an intersectional perspective can be a fruitful entrance point to the analysis of political and discursive tensions between gender equality strategies and multiculturalism. But she also emphasized the necessity of transnational approaches and pointed out that feminist conceptualizations of intersectionalities are travelling over national borders and must be carefully contextualized in order to be analytically useful. The intersectionality debate was complicated even more by another member of the international advisory board, *Elzbieta Oleksy (Chapter 7)*. With Polish women’s and resistance movements under the last phase of Soviet hegemony as well as in postsocialist times as case study, she argued for a rethinking of the concept of women’s commonalities, which feminist intersectionality debates of the 1990s and 2000s and the critique of identity politics have problematized. Was the idea of commonalities discarded too early? Oleksy asked.

*Transdisciplinarity and embodiment* were also stressed by several speakers. These key words were among others very central in *Nina Lykke’s* and *Barbro Wijma’s* joint introduction to GEXcel research theme 4-5, *Sexual Health, Embodiment and Empowerment, Bridging Epistemological Gaps (Chapter 5)*. From both theoretical and empirical perspectives the complex entanglement of sex and gender, materiality and discourse, the somatic and the psychic was stressed. The importance of transdisciplinary approaches to these complexities were underscored, but also that it requires a lot of reflexive efforts to bridge epistemological gaps between traditional approaches of medicine and biology, on the one hand, and those of cultural studies and humanities, on the other.

*Nina Lykke, Linköping University. Director of GEXcel*



# Chapter 1

## CENTRE OF GENDER EXCELLENCE, Gendering Excellence – GEXcel

Towards a European Centre of Excellence in Transnational and Transdisciplinary Studies of

- Changing Gender Relations
- Intersectionalities
- Embodiment

*Nina Lykke*

In 2006, the Swedish Research Council granted 20 mio SEK to set up a Center of Gender Excellence at the inter-university Institute of Thematic Gender Studies, Linköping University & Örebro University for the period 2007-2011. Linköping University has added 5 mio SEK as matching funds, while Örebro University has added 3 mio SEK as matching funds.

The following is a short presentation of the excellence center. For more info contact: Scientific Director of GEXcel, Prof. Nina Lykke (ninly@tema.liu.se), Secretary Berit Starkman (berst@tema.liu.se), or Research Coordinator: Malena Gustavson (malgu@tema.liu.se).

## Institutional basis of GEXcel

Institute of Thematic Gender Studies, Linköping University & Örebro University

The institute is a collaboration between:

Department of Gender Studies, Linköping University

Centre for Feminist Social Studies, Örebro University

Affiliated with the Institute are:

Division of Gender and Medicine, Linköping University

Centre for Gender Studies, Linköping University

## GEXcel Board and lead-team

- a transdisciplinary team of Gender Studies professors:

- Prof. Nina Lykke, Linköping University (Director) - Gender and Culture; background: Literary Studies;
- Prof. Anita Göransson, Linköping University - Gender, Organisation and Economic Change; background: Economic History;
- Prof. Jeff Hearn, Linköping University - Critical Studies of Men and Masculinities; background: Sociology and Organisation Studies;
- Prof. Anna G. Jónasdóttir, Örebro University - Gender Studies with a profile of Political Science;
- Prof. Christine Roman, Örebro University - Sociology with a profile of Gender Studies
- Prof. Barbro Wijma, Linköping University - Gender and Medicine

## International advisory board

- Prof. Karen Barad, University of California, St. Cruz, USA
- Prof. Rosi Braidotti, University of Utrecht, The Netherlands
- Prof. Raewyn Connell, University of Sydney, Australia
- Prof. Em. Leonore Davidoff, Univ. of Essex, UK
- Prof. Em. Kathleen B. Jones, San Diego State University, USA.
- Prof. Elzbieta Oleksy, University of Lodz, Poland
- Prof. Berit Schei, Norwegian University of Technology, Trondheim, Norway
- Prof. Birte Siim, University of Aalborg, Denmark

## Aims of GEXcel

The aims of GEXcel is:

1) to set up a temporary (5 year) Centre of Gender Excellence (Gendering EXcellence: GEXcel) in order to develop innovative research on changing gender relations, intersectionalities and embodiment from transnational and transdisciplinary perspectives.

2) to become a pilot or developmental scheme for a more permanent Sweden-based European Collegium for Advanced Transnational and Transdisciplinary Gender Studies (CATSgender).

## A core activity of GEXcel 2007-2011

A core activity will be a visiting fellows programme, organized to attract excellent senior researchers and promising younger scholars from Sweden and abroad and from many disciplinary backgrounds. The visiting fellows are taken in after application and a peer-reviewed evaluation process of the applications; a number of top scholars within the field are also invited to be part of GEXcel's research teams. GEXcel's visiting fellows get from 1 week to 12 months grants to stay at GEXcel to do research together with the permanent staff of 6 Gender Studies professors and other relevant local staff.

The Fellowship Programme is concentrated on annually shifting thematical foci. We select and construct shifting research groups, consisting of excellent researchers of different academic generations (professors, post-doctoral scholars, doctoral students) to carry out new research on specified research themes within the overall frame of changing gender relations, intersectionalities and embodiment.

## Brief definition of overall research theme of GEXcel

The overall theme of GEXcel research is defined as *transnational and transdisciplinary studies of changing gender relations, intersectionalities and embodiment*. We have chosen a broad and inclusive frame in order to attract a diversity of excellent scholars from different disciplines, countries and academic generations, but specificity and focus are also given high priority and ensured via annually shifting thematical foci.

The overall keywords are chosen in order to indicate currently pressing theoretical and methodological challenges of gender research to be addressed by GEXcel research:

-- By the keyword “*transnational*” we underline that GEXcel research should contribute to a systematic transnationalizing of research on gender relations, intersectionalities and embodiment, and, in so doing, develop a reflexive stance vis-a-vis transnational travelling of ideas, theories and concepts, and consciously try to overcome reductive one-country focused research as well as pseudo-universalizing research that unreflectedly takes e.g. “Western” or “Scandinavian” models as norm.

-- By the keyword “*changing*” we aim at underlining that it, in a world of rapidly changing social, cultural, economic and technical relations, is crucial to be able to theorize change, and that this is of particular importance for critical gender research due to its liberatory aims and inherent focus on macro-, meso- and microlevel transformations.

-- By the keyword “*gender relations*”, we aim at underlining that we define gender not as an essence, but as relational, plural and shifting process, and that it is the aim of GEXcel research to contribute to a further understanding of this process.

-- By the keyword “*intersectionalities*”, we stress that a continuous reflection on meanings of intersectionalities in gender research should be integrated in all GEXcel research. In particular, we will emphasize four different aspects: a) *intersectionality as intersections of disciplines and main areas (humanities, social sciences and medical and natural sciences)*; b) *intersectionality as intersections between macro-, meso- and microlevel social analyses*; c) *intersectionality as intersections between social categories and power differentials organized around categories such as gender, ethnicity, race, class, sexuality, age, nationality, profession, disability etc)*; d) *intersectionality as intersections between major different branches of feminist theorizing (eg. queerfeminist theorizing, Marxist feminist theorizing, postcolonial feminist theorizing etc.)*.

-- Finally, by the keyword “*embodiment*”, we aim at emphasizing yet another kind of intersectionality, which has proved crucial in current gender research - to explore intersections between discourse and materiality and between sex and gender.

## Specific research themes for first 2,5 year period of GEXcel

The research at GEXcel will focus on shifting themes. The research themes are to be announced for the first 2,5 years are the following:

Theme 1) “Gender, sexuality and global change” (on interactions of gender and sexuality in a global perspective), headed by Anna G. Jónasdóttir.

Theme 2) “Deconstructing the Hegemony of Men and Masculinities: Contradictions of Absence” (on ways to critically analyse constructions of the social category “men”) headed by Jeff Hearn.

Theme 3) “Distinctions and Authorizations” (on meanings of gender, class, and ethnicity in constructions of elites), headed by Anita Göransson.

Theme 4 + 5) “Sexual health, embodiment and empowerment” (on new synergies between different kinds of feminist researchers’ (eg. philosophers’ and medical doctors’) approaches to the sexed body, headed by Nina Lykke and Barbro Wijma.

The thematically organized research groups will be chaired by GEXcel’s core staff of six Gender Studies professors, who make up a transdisciplinary team, covering humanities, social sciences and medicine. 7 more themes are under planning for the second 2,5 year period, and, in addition, 3 cross-cutting themes:

1. Theories and methodologies in transnational and transdisciplinary studies of gender relations, intersectionalities and embodiment.
2. Organizing of a more permanent European centre of gender excellence – exploring models (GEXflex).
3. Exploring sociotechnical models for combining virtual and physical co-presence while doing gender research.

## Ambitions and visions

The fellowship programme of GEXcel is constructed with the central purpose to create transnational and transdisciplinary research teams that will have the opportunity to work together for a certain time – long enough to do joint research, produce joint publications, joint international research applications and do other joint activities such as organizing international conferences.

Moreover, we consider GEXcel to be *a pilot or developmental scheme* for a more long-term European centre of gender excellence, i.e. for an institute- or collegium-like structure dedicated to transnational and transdisciplinary gender research, research training and education in advanced Gender Studies (CATSgender).

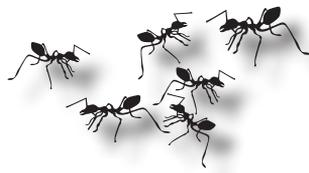
We will build on our extensive international networks to promote this idea of a permanent European institute for advanced and excellent gender research – and in collaboration with other European actors try to make this idea become real.

We also hope that a collaboration within Sweden, among others with the Centres of Gender Excellence in Umeå and Uppsala, will sustain the long-term goals of making a difference both in Sweden and abroad.

Leading international institutes for advanced study such as the Centre for the Study of Democracy at the University of California Irvine, and in Sweden The Swedish Collegium for Advanced Studies (SCAS at Uppsala University) have proved to be attractive environments and creative meeting places where top scholars in various fields from all over the world, and from different generations have found time for reflexive work and for meeting and generating new, innovative research. We would like to explore how this kind of academic structures that have proved very productive in terms of advancing excellence and high level, internationally important and recognized research within other areas of study, can unleash new potentials of gender research and initiate a new level of excellence within the area. The idea is, however not just to take an existing academic form for unfolding of excellence potentials and fill it with excellent gender research. Understood as a developmental/pilot scheme for CATSgender, GEXcel should build on inspirations from the mentioned units for advanced studies, but also further explore and assess what feminist excellence means in terms of both contents and form/structure.

We want to rework the advanced research collegium model on a feminist basis and include thorough reflections on meanings of gender excellence. What does it mean to gender excellence? How can we do it in even more excellent and feminist innovative ways?

# Presentations of GEXcel Research Themes, 2007-2009





## Chapter 2

### Theme 1: Gender, sexuality and global change

*Anna G. Jónasdóttir, Örebro University*

The idea guiding this research program is that we need a new approach to thinking about sexuality and its relationship to gender. The objective is to contribute to feminist thought and gender theory and research by developing a specific, complex conception of sexuality. It undertakes a shift in perspective from defining sexuality as an identity category to analysing sexuality as a set of relations, activities, needs, desires, productive/reproductive powers and capacities, identities, values, institutions, and organizational and structural contexts (Jónasdóttir and Jones forthcoming; Jónasdóttir forthcoming, 2002, 1991/1994; Derek Layder 1993; Hearn and Parkin 1987/1995; Padgug 1979/1989).

This research programme will build on the work of social analysts who have opened up new arenas of investigation by exploring the sexuality-related dimensions of global problems such as migration, mortality and morbidity, economic development and patterns of structural adjustment, militarization and other forms of political-economic intervention, nation-state transformation and regional and transnational economic and political change. For instance, studies of migration have identified the ways that gender intersects with racial/ethnic identity, patterning individuals' and groups' entry into formal and informal economies in distinct ways, i.e., to legitimate work or prostitution and trafficking. Human rights advocates have linked efforts to secure equality to investigations of the dynamics of sexualized violence, the use of rape as a systematic military strategy, the practice of honour-related violence and the sexual politics of AIDS. Nevertheless, it has proved difficult for feminist theorists and gender researchers to “maintain a long historical vision of the shifting intersections of sex and politics” (Di Leonardo and Lan-

caster 2002), thereby limiting the effectiveness and scope of conceptual frameworks guiding various feminist strategies for global change.

The argument put forward here defines sexuality as a basic link concept. As a subject matter, this research programme understands sexuality fundamentally as a broad and complex dimension of historically changing socio-cultural and human-material reality.

By approaching social, economic, political and cultural and biotechnological gender issues within a conceptual framework that defines sexuality in such broad terms, new perspectives on the various intersectionalities identified in this programme open up, and new research questions can be raised.

The research activities will be organised into three sub-themes: 1) Sexuality, Love and Social Theory; 2) Power and Politics: A Feminist View; and 3) Common and Conflicted: Rethinking Interest, Solidarity, and Action.

1) Sexuality, Love and Social Theory. What is sexuality? How do multi-level conceptions of sexuality (process of production of people, selves/subjectivities, relational activities carried out in different institutions and organisational contexts) intersect? Is Marx's method, or historical materialism more generally, useful for critical, constructive approaches to theory and research about sexuality, gendered power and global change? What is new in the "new materialism"? Would some kind of a complexity theory, focused on sexuality as socio-economically and socio-culturally embedded and politically conflicted and regulated enable better understanding of today's most urgent scientific and political questions?

2) Power and Politics: A Feminist View. After Foucault, what new can be said about power or sexuality or their interconnections? How are ideas about sexuality useful for building both analytically descriptive and action-oriented theories, which are not "merely sexual" (Jónasdóttir/Jones forthcoming) but also make contributions to critical-realist, ethico-political feminist social theory? After poststructuralism, what more can be said about distinctions among the social, the political, and the sexual?

3) Common and Conflicted: Rethinking Interest, Solidarity, and Action. How can we reconceptualize such key terms and ideas as common and conflicted interests, human plurality, solidarity and action through the lens of sociosexual complexity theory?

## References

- Di Leonardo, Micaela and Roger Lancaster (1996/2002): "Gender, Sexuality, Political Economy". Reprinted in: Nancy Holmstrom ed. *The Socialist Feminist Project. A Contemporary Reader in Theory and Politics*. Monthly Review Press.
- Hearn, Jeff and Wendy Parkin (1987/1995): "*Sex*" at "*Work*". *The Power and Paradox of Organization Sexuality*. Wheatsheaf Books. 2:nd revised ed. 1995. Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Jónasdóttir, Anna G. (forthcoming): "Feminist questions, Marx's method and the theorisation of 'love power'". In: *The Political Interests of Gender. Reconstructing Feminist Theory and Political Research*. Eds. Anna G. Jónasdóttir and Kathleen B. Jones. Manchester University Press, forthcoming.
- Jónasdóttir, Anna G. (2002): "Kärlefskraft. Feministiska frågor och Marx metod". In: *Häften för kritiska studier*. No. 2-4, pp 16-32.
- Jónasdóttir, Anna G. (1991): *Love Power and Political Interests. Towards a Theory of Patriarchy in Contemporary Western Societies*. Örebro Studies 7. and in: Göteborg Studies in Politics Series, No. 25. Also published and revised (1994), as "Why Women Are Oppressed" in: Temple University Press.
- Jónasdóttir, Anna G. and Kathleen B. Jones (forthcoming): "Out of Epistemology: feminist theory in the 1980s and beyond". In: *The Political Interests of Gender. Reconstructing Feminist Theory and Political Research*. Eds. Anna G. Jónasdóttir and Kathleen B. Jones. Manchester University press, forthcoming.
- Layder, Derek (1993): *New Strategies in Social Research*. Polity Press.
- Padgug, Robert A. (1979): "Sexual Matters: On Conceptualizing Sexuality in History", *Radical History Review* (Spring/Summer) 3-23. Reprinted in (1989): *Passion & Power: Sexuality in History*. Eds. Kathy Peiss, Christina Simmons, Robert A. Padgug. Temple University Press.



# Chapter 3

## Theme 2: Deconstructing the hegemony of men and masculinities: Contradictions of absence

*Jeff Hearn, Linköping University*

This program approaches theorising of gender and sexualities through a focus on the concept of hegemony in theorising men. The place of both force and consent of men in patriarchies is illuminated by such a concept that can assist engagement with both material and discursive gender power relations. Recent conceptual and empirical uses of hegemony, as in ‘hegemonic masculinity’ in the analysis of masculinities, have been subject to qualified critiques over the last ten years or more. This program examines the shift from masculinity to men, to focus on ‘the hegemony of men’.

### Hegemony

Hegemony addresses the relations of power and ideology, including the domination of what is ‘taken-for-granted’, and ‘commonsense’ definitions of the situation. It particularly highlights the importance of consent, even if that is provisional and contingent, and even if that consent is backed by force. In this sense, hegemony speaks more to complicity than to brutal enforcement. It refers to and reinforces what has been called the “fundamental outlook of society” (Bocock, 1986). In this sense, it is performative, but not simply a matter of performance. Hegemony encompasses the formation of social groupings, not just their operation and collective action. It is a structural concept, or at least invokes assumptions of structure, but is not structuralist.

Theorising on hegemony can be understood in terms of different theories of ideology within Marxian analysis. Nicholas Abercrombie and Bryan Turner (1978) showed how Marx presented two rather different theories of ideology. In the first, set out in the *Preface* (Marx, 1959/1975), “social being determines consciousness”: the particular social experience of particular social classes determines the ideas of the members of the class. Ideas follow immediate material relations, in terms of both general economic and social structural locations, and the conduct of everyday economic and social life. This approach lays the basis for the articulation of several class-based systems of ideas, even a relatively pluralist analysis. In the second, also set out in the *Preface*, but more famously in *The German Ideology*, “the economic structure, the real foundation” determines “a legal and political superstructure”, such that the ideas of “the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas.” (Marx and Engels, 1845/1970). This notion of ideology, like the first, embodies both material and intellectual force. It is, however, more deterministic, more concerned with the social formation rather than activities of particular classes and class fractions.

The Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci (1971), took the latter mode one step further, rejecting economic determinism. He saw politics and economics, in his historical frame of 1920s Italian Marxism and communism, set within wars of position and manoeuvre. In his view of hegemony the cultural and intellectual realm was more important, with greater political impact than as an effect of economic structure and relations. Hegemony encompassed the range of social arenas – material, economic, political, cultural, discursive – rather than prioritising the economic or the cultural.

Mike Donaldson (1993: 645) summarises some of the main features of hegemony as:

“... about the winning and holding of power and the formation (and destruction) of social groups in that process. It is about the ways in which the ruling class establishes and maintains its domination. The ability to impose a definition of the situation, to set the terms in which events are understood and issues discussed, to formulate ideals and define morality is an essential part of the process. Hegemony involves persuasion of the greater part of the population, particularly through the media, and the organization of social institutions in ways that appear “natural,” “ordinary,” “normal”. The state, through punishment for non-conformity, is crucially involved in this negotiation and enforcement.”

## Applications to men and masculinity

As noted, the notion of hegemony has been a key focus of recent research and debates on men and masculinities. There have been a number of ways in which the notion of hegemony has been used in studying men, as, for example, in ‘hegemonic heterosexual masculinity’ (Frank, 1987), ‘male hegemony’ (Cockburn, 1991), ‘the hegemonic male’ (Vale De Almeida, 1996), ‘hegemonic men’ (Dominelli and Gollins, 1997; Lorber, 2002), ‘hegemonic male sexuality’ (Mooney-Somers, 2005), and ‘hegemony masculinity’. Of these, this last use, that of hegemonic masculinity, has been by far the most popular and influential over the last twenty years of more.

The notion of hegemonic masculinity has been developed as an outcome – one might say more accurately an offshoot - of R.W. (now Raewyn) Connell and colleagues’ work on gendered social processes within patriarchy. In various publications Connell and colleagues have emphasised processes of hegemony, dominance/subordination, complicity, marginalisation (for example, by class or by ethnicity), as well as other processes of resistance, protest and ambivalence (Connell, 1995). This process usage of hegemony has been by no means as popular or influential as another usage employed by Connell and colleagues, namely in terms of linking hegemony to masculinity. In this, ‘hegemony’ as one key social process mutates to ‘hegemonic’ as a descriptor of certain (multiple) masculinities. In this latter and very powerful scheme, forms of masculinity that have been recognised principally:

- hegemonic masculinity, legitimating “patriarchy”;
- complicit masculinity, bringing benefit without effort;
- subordinated masculinity, by gender-related relations, for example gay;
- marginalised masculinity, by, for example, class or ethnicity;

Sometimes there are also references to resistant, protest or ambivalent masculinities. However, as suggested above, seeing hegemony as a process is rather different from seeing hegemony in terms of forms of masculinity.

Interestingly, the first published use of the term, hegemonic masculinity, was by Connell in 1979 in the paper, “Men’s bodies”, and republished in *Which Way Is Up?* (Connell 1983). Its background was debates on patriarchy. The paper was published alongside two others on theories of patriarchy and empirical research on boys and girls in schools. In a

further paper on the theory of social reproduction, he critiqued functionalist take-over of the term “hegemony” (Connell, 1983: 156). From this first use, the hegemony at issue in relation to masculinities was the hegemony involved in the patriarchal system of gender relations. In a personal communication Connell in 2000 reported that “I was trying to direct attention onto the patterns of conduct and emotion involved in men’s activity in a patriarchal system, including some of the complexities, division and contradictions – as I was also at the time trying to get a theoretical handle on the process of historical change in patriarchy.”

The “Men’s bodies” paper is very interesting in a number of respects. It considers the social construction of the body in boys’ and adult men’s practices. In discussing “the physical sense of maleness”, Connell marks out the social importance of sport as ‘the central experience of the school years for many boys’ (1983: 18), emphasising the practices and experiences of taking and occupying space, holding the body tense and skill, as well as size, power, force, strength, physical development and sexuality. In addressing the bodies of adult men, he highlights the importance of physicality within three realms: work, sexuality, fatherhood. Above all, Connell stresses that:

“the embedding of masculinity in the body is very much a social process, full of tensions and contradiction; that even physical masculinity is historical, rather than a biological fact. ... constantly in process, constantly being constituted in actions and relations, constantly implicated in historical change.” (p. 30).

The use of hegemony is developed in the much more well-known paper published in 1985. Here, Carrigan, Connell and Lee write that hegemony

“always refers to an historical situation, a set of circumstances in which power is won and held. The construction of hegemony is not a matter of pushing and pulling of ready-formed groupings but is partly a matter of the formation of these groupings. To understand the different kinds of masculinity demands an examination of the practices in which hegemony is constituted and contested – in short, the political techniques of the patriarchal social order.” (Carrigan et al., 1985, 594).

One might argue that there is a slippage from the formation of these groupings to the understanding of the different kinds of masculinity. At this point one might conclude that hegemony can mean many different things, but more significantly this shows the importance of being clear whether it is the formation of groupings or the different kinds of mascu-

linity within them that is addressed. These seem to be different foci. In the book, *Masculinities* (Connell 1995), hegemonic is defined by Connell as: "... the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women." (Connell 1995: 77). This is again a different emphasis to the social process usage of hegemony.

## Some critiques of hegemonic masculinity

It is perhaps not so surprising that these (and other) various conceptual and empirical uses of hegemony, as in 'hegemonic masculinity' in the analysis of masculinities, have been subject to a variety of qualified critiques over the last ten years or more (for example, Donaldson, 1993; Hearn, 1996, 2004; Wetherell and Edley, 1999; Whitehead, 1999, 2002; Demetriou, 2001; Howson, 2006). These critiques have highlighted: lack of clarity in the concept; lack of evidence or inconsistency or insufficient complexity in terms of detailed empirical studies; as well as theoretical and political inadequacies, for example, in relation to postcolonial theory and queer theory (also see Butler, 1990; Halberstam, 1998; Ouzgane and Coleman, 1998). More specifically, a range of questions can be put that are yet to be clearly answered:

- Is hegemonic masculinity a matter of cultural representations, everyday practices or institutional structures, or all three?
- Can hegemonic masculinity be reduced to fixed set of practices?
- Should one talk of hegemonic masculinities in the plural?
- How do various dominant and dominating forms, such as violence and control of resources, interconnect with each other?
- Why use the term, "masculinity"? What does it mean, include or exclude? (Hearn, 1996)
- Does hegemonic masculinity fit detailed empirical studies, for example, how men talk about themselves?
- How does hegemonic masculinity relate to postcolonial critiques?
- Where is the counter-hegemonic? (Donaldson, 1993)

A recent review of the concept by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) addressed some but not all of these and other critiques.

## The hegemony of men

Most importantly, the concept of hegemony has generally been employed in too restricted a way. The focus on masculinity is too narrow. If we are interested in what is hegemonic about gender relation to men and masculinity, then it is ‘men’ who or which are far more hegemonic than masculinity. Thus, instead, it is time to go back from masculinity to men, to examine the hegemony of men and about men. This involves addressing the hegemony of men – in both senses. The hegemony of men seeks to address the double complexity that men are both a social category formed by the gender system and dominant collective and individual agents of social practices. The hegemony of men instead raises these key social processes:

- social processes by which there is hegemonic acceptance of the category of men.
- the system of distinctions and categorisations between different forms of men and men’s practices to women, children and other men (“masculinities”).
- which men and which men’s practices – in the media, the state, religion, etc - are most powerful in setting those agendas of those systems of differentiations.
- the most widespread, repeated forms of men’s practices.
- description and analysis of men’s various and variable everyday, “natural(ised)”, “ordinary”, “normal” and most taken-for-granted practices to women, children and other men, and their contradictory, even paradoxical, meanings.
- how women may differentially support certain practices of men, and subordinate other practices of men or ways of being men.
- interrelations between these elements above ... relations between ‘men’s’ formation within hegemonic gender order, that also forms ‘women’, other genders and boys, and men’s activity in different ways in (re-)forming hegemonic differentiations among men. (Hearn, 2004).

## The program

This program examines shifts from masculinity to men, to focus on ‘the hegemony of men’. It addresses the double complexity that men are both a social category formed by the gender system and collective and individual agents, often dominant agents. It examines how the category

“men” is used in national and transnational gender systems. These uses are both intersectional and embodied in specific ways.

Dominant uses of the social category of men have often been restricted by, for example, class, ethnicity/racialisation and (hetero)sexuality; these issues have been explored in, for example, postcolonial theory and queer theory. Less examined is the construction of the category of men in terms of assumptions about: age, ageing and (dis)ability; nationality/national context; and bodily presence.

Indeed, despite the explicitness of some of the statements of Connell and colleagues, there have been a number of neglected or missing elements in some recent debates on and applications of hegemony to men and masculinities, including:

- relations of hegemony to “patriarchy”;
- relations of hegemony to “bodies” (note: the first formulations in the late 1970s);
- relations of hegemony to moves away from notion of fundamental outlook of ‘society’ (Bocock, 1986), nation and the nation-state to the growing importance of the “transnational” (note: increasing attention to globalisation, e.g. Connell, 1993, 1998);
- relations of hegemony to the (changing) “form” of the social, cultural, and indeed the virtual (note: despite anti-functionalist critiques of social change).

Thus this program examines how the hegemony of men is being (re) defined in relation to three intersectional, embodied arenas: in terms of problematising hegemony in practice, by way of these neglected arenas: (older) ageing, bodies, (dis)abilities; transnationalisations; and virtuality. In each case these are arenas that can be seen as forms of absent presence, by marginalisation by age/death, disembodiment, and disconnection from nation, respectively. Each presents reinforcements, challenges and contradictions, to hegemonic categorisations of men. These three aspects and ‘exclusions’ are problematised as the focus of this program over the five years of GEXcel. In each case these are arenas that can be seen as forms of absent presence (Hearn 1998), by marginalisation by age/disability/death, disconnection from nation, and disembodiment respectively. Each of these presents reinforcements, challenges and contradictions, to hegemonic categorisations of men.

Moreover, the theme of ‘contradictions of absence’ refers to these three arenas in which absence of some men (or aspects of some men) may both, and contradictorily, reinforce hegemony of men and potentially at least subvert that hegemony; absence acts as both a source of power and a way of undermining power.

## Three projects in the program

### (i) The Older Men and Disability project

Debates, dominant constructions and media and other representations and images of men and masculinities are dominated by younger men and men “of middle years”, as if men and masculinities “end” pre-old age. When images of older men are presented in the media they are generally very partial, very limited. Age, ageing, men, maleness and masculinities intersect in many different, complex ways. An under-explored area is the frequent exclusion of older men, men with certain disabilities and dying (though not dead) men from the category of “men”. (Older) Age is a contradictory source of power and disempowerment for men; the social category of older men is contradictory (Hearn, 1995). In many societies age and ageing has been a ‘traditional’ source of patriarchal power, and of (some) men’s power in relation to women, older women, younger men. This relation of men’s age and men’s gender power has become more complex and problematic. In many contemporary societies, age and ageing can be a source of some men’s lack of power, in relation to loss of power of the body, loss of and changing relations to work, and significant extension of the ‘age of weakness’.

Men’s generational power in families and communities has been widely overtaken by major national and international institutions, most obviously in the state and business. These latter institutions have their own patterns of domination by particular groupings or segments of men. Contemporary contradictions of men’s ageing stem partly from inter-relations of sexism and ageism. Put simply, older men benefit through sexism, while, at the same time, older men are disadvantaged by ageism. Older men and older masculinities can be understood as an “absent presence” (Hearn, 1998). Indeed (some) older men may even become a contradictory, another Other - to younger men, even women. On the other hand, age and ageing do not necessarily reduce men’s power. Age and ageing are a source of financial power for some men, so that age also brings greater economic divergence. Men’s labour-power may be extended, through information technology and ‘cyborg-ageing’, pacemakers, disability aids and so on.

## **(ii) The Men of the World project**

Transnationalisation takes many forms and has many implications for men and gender relations (Zalewski and Palpart, 1998; Hearn and Par-kin, 2001; Hearn and Pringle, 2006). It is perhaps the most acutely contradictory of processes, with multiple forms of absence for both men in power and those dispossessed through, for example, forced migration. Different transnationalisations problematise taken-for-granted national and organisational contexts, and men therein in many ways. The project builds on the earlier project: 'Men, Gender Relations and Transnational Organising, Organisations and Management' on: gender relations in the large business companies; and men's gendered organisational practices in European countries, and differential relations of (supra)national policy to "men" and men's organising "as men".

One key example of the impact of transnationalisation is the importance of managers in transnational organisations for the formation and reproduction of gender orders in organisations and societies. In light of the globalisation of business life and the expansion of transnational organisations, the concept of "transnational business masculinity" describes a new form of masculinity among globally mobile managers. Connell (1998) sees this form of masculinity as marked by "increasing egocentrism, very conditional loyalties (even to the corporation), and a declining sense of responsibility for others (except for purposes of image-making)." (Connell 1998, 16). It differs from "traditional bourgeois masculinity by its increasingly libertarian sexuality, with a growing tendency to commodify relations with women." Studies focusing on senior managers, still overwhelmingly men, are necessary to understand how the hegemony of men is reproduced and changed globally. This involves international research and multiple methods (e.g. diaries, international associations, travel, men's networks).

## **(iii) The Virtual Men project**

Virtualisation processes present sites for contestations of hegemony in terms of bodily presence/absence of men. The focus here is the positive, negative and contradictory effects of certain uses of information and communication technologies (ICTs) upon men's, and women's, sexuality and sexual violences, as men act as producers and consumers of virtuality, represent women in virtual media, and are themselves being represented, even made dispensable (Hearn, 2006). These structural and agentic differentiations, with and without force, may suggest multiply differentiated (trans)patriarchies that are stable and changing, fixed and flexible. Charting the particular, changing forms of these rigidities and

movements of and around the taken-for-granted social category of men may be a means of interrogating the possibility of the abolition of ‘men’ as a significant social category of power. The implications of ICTs for the reformulation of social space and public (sexual) domains are examined.

## Closing remarks

Importantly, there are key connections between these three projects, and the different men thereby implicated: social processes across and between arenas, for example, men’s violences; forms of re-engagements with “absent” bodies; diverse links across the economic, the political, and the cultural; possibilities for both extensions and subversions of men’s power. In all, the concept of transpatriarchies may be a relevant theme. The persistence, and usefulness, of the concept of patriarchy, despite obvious critiques, remains. Following earlier debates on historical shifts to, first, public patriarchies, analysis of transnational patriarchies or transpatriarchies is now needed. These contradictory social processes may also further the possibility of the abolition of the social category of “men, as a category of power”, an approach and prospect bringing together materialist theory/politics and queer theory/politics.

Finally, I would like to end on a practical note, with brief comments on some ongoing activities at Tema Genus in Linköping University within and linking to this program. These include: research by four doctoral students at Tema Genus on the area (from 2006, Dag Balkmar, Linn Sandberg; from 2007, Alp Biricik, Tanja Joelsson); close links with doctoral research in Tema Barn; establishment in 2006 of The Research Group on Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities with over 20 members; co-editing of the international journal, *Men and Masculinities*; research with Ulf Mellström, Luleå University of Technology, on men and movement; production of guidelines on researching sexual violence, with Kjerstin Andersson, Tema Barn, and Malcolm Cowburn, University of Bradford, for the Sexual Violence Research Initiative, funded by Global Forum for Health Research; special issue of *NORMA: The Nordic Journal of Masculinity Studies* on the life course; and plans to create an Archive on Profeminism and Critical Studies on Men.

## References

- Abercrombie, Nicolas and Turner, Bryan S. (1978): "The dominant ideology thesis". In: *British Journal of Sociology*, 29(2), pp 149-170.
- Bocock, Robert (1986): *Hegemony*. London: Tavistock.
- Butler, Judith (1990): *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. London: Routledge.
- Carrigan, Tim, Connell, R.W., Lee, John (1985): "Towards a new sociology of masculinity". In: *Theory and Society*, 14(5) 551-604.
- Cockburn, Cynthia (1991): *In the Way of Women* London: Macmillan.
- Connell, R.W. (1983): *Which Way Is Up?* Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Connell, R.W. (1993): "The big picture: Masculinities in recent world history". In: *Theory and Society*, 22(5): 597-623.
- Connell, R.W. (1995): *Masculinities*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Connell, R.W. (1998): "Men in the world: masculinities and globalization". In: *Men and Masculinities*, 1(1) 3-23.
- Connell, R.W. and Messerschmidt, James W. (2005) 'Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept', *Gender and Society*, 19(6) 829-859.
- Frank, Blye (1987): "Hegemonic heterosexual masculinity". In: *Studies in Political Economy*, 24: 159-170.
- Demetriou, Demetrakis Z. (2001): "Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity: A critique". In: *Theory and Society*, 30(3) 337-361.
- Dominelli, Lena and Gollins, Tim (1997): "Men, power and caring relationships". In: *Sociological Review*, 45(3) 396-415.
- Donaldson, Mike (1993): "What is hegemonic masculinity?" In: *Theory and Society*, 22(5) 643-657.
- Gramsci, Antonio (1971): *Selections from the Prison Notebook*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Halberstam, Judith (1998): *Female Masculinity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

- Hearn, Jeff (1995): "Imaging the aging of men". In: *Images of Aging: Cultural Representations of Later Life*. Eds. Mike Featherstone, Andrew Wernick. London: Routledge, pp. 97-115.
- Hearn, Jeff (1996): "Is masculinity dead?' A critical account of the concept of masculinity/masculinities". In: *Understanding Masculinities: Social Relations and Cultural Arenas*. Ed. Máirtín Mac an Ghail. Milton Keynes: Open University Press, pp. 202-217.
- Hearn, Jeff (1998): "Theorizing men and men's theorizing: men's discursive practices in theorizing men". In: *Theory and Society*, 27(6), pp 781-816.
- Hearn, Jeff (2004): "From hegemonic masculinity to the hegemony of men". In: *Feminist Theory*, 5(1) 49-72. Available at: <http://fty.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/5/1/49>
- Hearn, Jeff (2006): "The implications of information and communication technologies for sexualities and sexualised violences: contradictions of sexual citizenships". In: *Political Geography*, 25(8), pp 944-963.
- Hearn, Jeff and Parkin, Wendy (2001): *Gender, Sexuality and Violence in Organizations: the Unspoken Forces of Organization Violations*. London: Sage.
- Hearn, Jeff and Pringle, Keith, with members of CROME (Critical Studies on Men in Europe) (2006): *European Perspectives on Men and Masculinities: National and Transnational Approaches*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Howson, Richard (2005): *Challenging Hegemonic Masculinity*. Routledge, London.
- Lorber, Judith (2002): "Heroes, warriors, and 'burqas': A feminist sociologist's reflections on September 11". In: *Sociological Forum*, 17(3), pp 377-396.
- Marx, Karl (1859/1975): "Preface' to the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy" In: *Karl Marx: Early Writings*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Marx, Karl and Engels, Fredrick (1845/1970): *The German Ideology*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Mooney-Somers, Julie (2005): *Heterosexual Male Sexuality: Representations and Sexual Subjectivity*. PhD Thesis. University of Western Sydney.

- Ouzgane, Lahoucine and Coleman, Daniel (1998): "Postcolonial masculinities: Introduction." In: *Jouvert: A Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 2 (1). Available at: <http://social.chass.ncsu.edu/jouvert/v2i1/con21.htm>
- Vale De Almeida, Miguel (1996): *The Hegemonic Male: Masculinity in a Portuguese Town*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Wetherell, Margaret and Edley, Nigel (1999): "Negotiating hegemonic masculinity: imaginary positions and psycho-discursive practices". *Feminism & Psychology*, 9(3), pp 335-356.
- Whitehead, Stephen (1999): "Hegemonic masculinity revisited". In: *Gender, Work and Organization*, 6(1), pp 58-62.
- Whitehead, Stephen (2002): *Men and Masculinities*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Zalewski, Marysia and Palpart, Jane (eds.) (1998): *The "Man" Question in International Relations*. Oxford: Westview Press.



# Chapter 4

## Theme 3: Distinctions and Authorizations

*Anita Göransson, Linköping University*

### Gender, class and ethnicity in the vicinity of power

Anita Göransson, head of Theme 3, gave a key note speech on the occasion of her new book *Maktens kön* (Göransson 2007). In addition, she presented the background of the GEXcel theme *Distinctions and Authorizations*:

The coining of the phrase intersectionality could be said to signify our graduation from studying distinctions one by one (such as gender) or at the most two by two (gender and class, or gender and sexuality) to the study of multiple and simultaneous belongings and how they are valued in different contexts.

So the concept seems to be the logical development of the previous preoccupation of gender scholars with gender and class, later also with sexuality and ethnicity, and more recently with age, generation, and disability as possible distinctions. The need became urgent to be able to handle combinations of distinctions and how they influence one another in different contexts.

I will give a tentative example of this kind of work on the basis of a recent investigation into the Swedish power elite and what distinguishes those women and men who have reached the top in various elite groups. We wanted to study the gendered access to power, and the best way to do it seemed to be in the upper echelons of society – where presumably the most powerful positions and people are to be found. We asked: Why are there so few women at the top? And why are there relatively many women in politics, but extremely few in the business elite? In what way

may distinctions (such as gender and social class) reinforce one another, and when do they counteract one another? What role has the context in which they are at play?

In a recently published book our multidisciplinary research group presented the results from the project. Our group consisted of nine researchers from various disciplines, and the project was financed by the Swedish Bank Tercentenary Fund. The Swedish title of our anthology is *Maktens kön: Kvinnor och män i den svenska makteliten på 2000-talet*, [*The Gender of Power: Women and Men in the Swedish Power Elite in the 2000s*] (Göransson 2007). It was based on survey answers in 2001 from a few thousand top leaders in all parts of society.

The questions covered their social, economic and geographical background, education, careers, families, life styles, networks, personal relations with other elite people, professionally or socially, mentors, general political views and party affiliations, views on gender equality, careers and social power, and on various political issues that are debated today.

This laid the foundation of a collective biography. The book is structured as a chronological success story about how the top leaders-to-be collected capital, that is, resources and contacts, during many years until they finally reached their present top positions. We followed their life trajectories to find out what characterized those who made it to the top. How much did they have in common?

Two years ago we published another anthology called *Makten och mångfalden. Eliter och etnicitet i Sverige*. [*Power and Diversity: Elites and Ethnicity in Sweden*] (Göransson 2005). It was based on the same survey material and on interviews but focusing on ethnicity. It was written as part of a government-funded investigation about immigrants and integration in the Swedish society.

Taken together these two studies demonstrate a systematic and quite intriguing pattern of connections between gender, class, ethnicity on one hand, and different types of power and career tracks on the other.

Two aspects of the Swedish elite make it particularly fruitful to study as a gendered entity. First, Sweden is a small country which makes it feasible to use the entire elite as the basis for analysis. We do not have to select a sample. This, for instance, allows us to study the distribution of people of a certain gender, class or ethnic background in the various elite groups.

Secondly, the share of women is high enough for it to be possible to compare women and men in the elite. In most countries elite women are too few for this to be a statistically meaningful operation.

## The analytical framework

Swedish gender scholars have often used an approach by historian Yvonne Hirdman that distinguishes between two main principles of the gender system: on one hand, the tendency to construct difference between women and men by separating them spatially and functionally, ascribing different qualities to them; and on the other hand, the hierarchical superordination of men over women, that is, constructing the male norm as dominant. These principles have been important in structuring material as well as interpretations. But they tend to emphasize the commonalities of gender in time and space, as they focus on the reproduction of the hierarchical and separating principles.

We needed concepts that would allow us to make finer distinctions and to find differences within the gender system or order. In our quest for sharper analytical tools for better precision and subtlety, we turned to French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and his concepts of field, capital and habitus. They were developed in his studies of the French elites, and they turned out to suit our purpose very well.

The analytical category of gender is not very well developed in the studies by Bourdieu. But we found that our interpretation of the concept of gender could easily be accommodated to Bourdieu's conceptual framework: as an aspect of habitus, as a symbolical capital and as a concept which is given meaning by the context.

Gender in our investigation turned out to be differently valued in different contexts. In our ethnicity study we found that the category of ethnicity also worked in this way. The third concept in our work – that of class – had already been included by Bourdieu in his approach in a way that we could accept. We have interpreted it in a way similar to the other distinctions.

So, even if the three distinctions stemmed from very different power orders and contexts, and have different physical and mental manifestations and different histories, they had effects that were – for our purposes – comparable, at least to the extent that they could be said to be discursively constructed.

We found that both gender, class and ethnicity could be seen as relative categories that constitute value hierarchies, where they are sometimes given a positive symbolical value, sometimes a negative one – depending on the context. They are relative to the context they are interpreted in. The context that we found fruitful and chose to interpret them in was the social field where the persons in question were professionally active.

We therefore compared the elite groups in business, politics, public administration, organizations (including churches), mass media, culture, and Academia. With the field concept we could take the analysis one step further, distinguishing social fields in society with their own logics, career patterns, recruitment processes, and relation to various power orders, but also in the cultural and other capital, the life styles, family situation and political views of the elite people in the fields.

As compared to using the idea of separate and hierarchical gender relations the field logic was a sharper tool.

So let me introduce you to the Swedish elite.

## The Swedish power elite

In Sweden a fourth of the roughly 3 000 top leaders are women. This is more than in other countries, even counting other Nordic countries. The previous count was made 12 years ago, when women's share was found to be 13 per cent. So women's share of power positions is slowly growing – but in a very uneven way. The two extremes are the business elite with five per cent women in top positions, and the political field with 45 per cent women at the top. All other fields have between 25 and 30 per cent women.

In an international perspective the Swedish elite is both similar to other national elites and different from them. Thus, the power elite is  $\frac{3}{4}$  male, they are Swedish-born of Swedish parents, middle-aged, upper middle class, university educated, with at least 20 years of career behind them, they are married, have children, and they have well developed networks, mostly in Stockholm. These are traditional elite traits, and they characterize both women and men.

But there are also differences in comparison with other countries. In the Nordic countries it is possible to reach an elite position in politics or in organizations (civil society) with a lower social background, without a higher education, as a woman, or with a non-European background, that is, more like the population in general.

This is usually explained with the strong labor movements and other popular movements and their historical access to government. This has given rise to two different elite groups with different social bases, one in business and one in politics.

## Similarities and differences

However, conformity rules at the top. This is usually interpreted as a strategy for efficiently exerting power. Women and men at the top are similar in most aspects. They have the same background, education, urban upbringing and good networks. The differences we have found are between the fields, not between the genders.

But there are important differences between women and men at the top in two respects:

### 1. One concerns their *location* in the elite.

The elite group that is most male-dominated is as mentioned found in privately owned big business, where women are very few. The most gender-balanced elite group is the political elite, where about half of elite positions belong to women. But even in other fields, such as mass media, universities and culture, there is the same tendency; women have top positions that are influenced by the representative logic that is paradigmatically found in politics. So, in mass media for instance, women are found in public service media, men dominate commercial media. In Academia there are women in public research funding institutions, but men dominate the academies of science and arts, where new members are coopted. Wherever there is an ambition to recruit people of all kinds, women will more easily make a career. On the other hand, men in media will more often have administrative and economic positions.

Thus the market logic and commercial emphasis is prevalent among men in the elite, while the political logic dominates among women.

### 2. The other gender difference concerns their *family situation* – both their family of origin and their present family situation.

Both men and women in the elite have grown up with two working parents to a much larger extent than the population in general in that period. But elite women had an educated, working mother, who was active in organizations, to a much larger degree than elite men - and much more often than both men and women in the population. Maybe a working mother has been a role model, and probably both parents may have encouraged the daughter's career plans.

But in their own present family situation we may distinguish two alternatives among women. Either elite women are single but often living with children from an earlier marriage, or they are married to a man who also has a career, often in the same field. So, either they found a husband who knew what it was all about and supported them – or they did not. The

difference in comparison with most other countries is that in Sweden it is possible for women too to have both a career and children. This has been explained with the well organized public childcare system.

While elite women are married to the same extent as other women in their generation and age, elite men are married to a much greater extent (more than 90 per cent) than their generation of men. Among elite men the business elite stand out in that so many of them (one third) have either a housewife or a part-time working wife. This is a traditional gender arrangement that is not found in the rest of Swedish society nowadays; here about two per cent of the women are housewives.

## Exclusive and popular fields have different logics

In elite research one usually distinguishes between exclusive and popular fields. In exclusive fields both women and men have an extra high social background, an extra high education, in short, more cultural capital than in other fields. Exclusive fields are business, public administration and Academia. These fields are meritocratic or cooptative. In these fields it seems that women have to compensate for their generally lower-valued gender by having an even higher social background, an even higher education, and generally being better qualified than men. This has been noted in many countries.

In the Nordic countries politics and organizations constitute what is known as more popular fields, where the elite has a wider range of social backgrounds, a lower education, but organizational skills and political experience. Here we have found that many women have a lower background than the men, partly because they represent organizations with another social basis than the men, but probably also because the recruitment of women is looked upon favorably in these fields. They have a representative ambition. It is important here that all categories in society be represented in politics. Here, an otherwise lower valued background may therefore be transformed into a positive symbolical capital (in Bourdieu's terms), an asset. Here different genders, class backgrounds, ages and regional origins are needed. The field would not be legitimate without a broad recruitment policy. No group in society should be left out.

So this is where we find gender balance. However, women are found not only in the political field itself; in other fields they predominantly have positions that are influenced by the public representative logic, such as positions in state owned companies, in public research councils, and public service media.

It is, in other words, politics that provides access to power for women.

Men on the other hand are found in economic positions also in other fields than business, and in positions that control the symbolical capital in, for instance, the Nobel committees, the Swedish Academy, the Academy of Science, etc.

## Class and gender in the ethnic status order

We have also found that very few top leaders are foreign-born (only four per cent) or even born of foreign-born parents (another six per cent). Half of them however have a background in other Nordic countries, and there are extremely few from non-European or non-North American countries. The few that do have such a background have been found to have either an extremely high social background and/or a very affluent economic background. Either way, they could as it were compensate for their ethnic or national origin. For those who had more of a middle class background it seemed to be harder to make a career. Other factors were also important, such as how long they had lived in Sweden, at what stage in their life they came here, and with what background (educational, social, etc). Female gender affected them differently depending on what region they came from. A broad or narrow definition of suitable limits for women would of course determine their professional possibilities.

Some would try the same career track as native-born Swedes, but would often have to give it up and turn to what we have called a separate career track, that is, a track where they could convert their ethnic background into an asset. For instance, going into politics and specializing in integration and immigration issues, or having an academic career doing research on integration or on the region of the world where they came from.

So, here too a person would either be able to compensate for a lower valued ethnic background with a higher class background, a higher valued gender, extra economic resources, or he/she would convert his/her ethnic background into an asset by choosing a professional field where this is looked favorably upon.

In this study we saw very distinctly how ethnic background (as valued in Sweden and in different social fields here) in combination with gender and class background would decide the professional fate of the individual.

Thus we found that different backgrounds and distinctions such as gender, class and ethnicity are differently valued in exclusive fields and popular fields, respectively. The context where these distinctions are put

into play is therefore of vital importance. We need many studies of different groups, fields, organizations and aspects in order to have a better understanding of exclusion, inclusion and divisions in our increasingly diversified societies.

## To sum up

Gender, class and ethnicity are largely contextually determined categories and could be seen as aspects of habitus – the inherited and acquired embodiment of experience and distinctions (Bourdieu 1988, Moi 1991, Adkins & Skeggs 2004, Göransson 2005 and 2007). Their symbolical value will vary between contexts, such as social fields, a certain background may be positive in one context but negative in another. One distinction may also reinforce or upset the effects of another. At a structural level it will have important effects on social equality and cohesion as well as on democracy. We ask for instance whether gender equality is giving power to more people – or leading to stricter class-based closure.

## Future Research Questions in the GEXcel Program

The present research program is based on the findings mentioned above. It will however largely focus on international comparisons as well as transnational tendencies. To what degree is there a transnational elite today and in what fields? How does it relate to different distinctions, given that the class, gender, and ethnic orders differ between countries and cultures? Are differences between fields more obvious than differences between the genders, for instance, as is the case in the Nordic countries? Here the main difference between men and women in the elite was found in their family situations. This may however explain women's difficulties as family forms are intertwined with and supporting professional strategies, which is at its most extreme in the business elite.

1. *Careers and closure.* One study will be devoted (a) to the atypical top decision-maker (for instance so-called 'class travelers' who are so far a distinctly Scandinavian phenomenon at the top) and (b) to those who did not reach the top. At what level do they fail or choose to stay? A comparison between these two groups and the traditionally equipped majority in elite positions is expected to give more knowledge of the contextuality of various distinctions. Elite studies have traditionally not covered this problem, which must however be seen as crucial to the evaluation of the exclusivity of elites.
2. *To have or have not.* Another study will explore more carefully the role of networks that earlier research has found to be of great, perhaps decisive importance for success in gaining and exerting

public power, as well in professional life in general This study will build on case studies from four fields: first the academic elite and the cultural elite; later the business elite and political elite. The study of the academic elite in universities and research institutes, for instance, will explore the role of transnational personal ties for establishing a homogeneous, so far solidly male-dominated intellectual elite. The study of academic elites may also shed light on the dominating consensus on the interpretation of excellent scholarship. It may also give new insights in support of our own plans for creating an environment for Advanced Gender Studies.

3. *The dynastic dimension.* An important aspect of networks is the dynastic dimension which will be explored in a separate study, for which material has already been gathered. A result of the growing separation and specialization of professional and social fields seem to be an increasingly internal reproduction of positions. Thus there is an increasing social proximity among top decision-makers, including family and kinship relations. This has traditionally been the case in the business elite where material inheritance is important. But as social and cultural inheritance has gained importance in other social fields it has become more controversial. The growing advantage of an inherited cultural capital in different fields will therefore be investigated as a potential problem for representative democracy, as well as grounds for possibly tightening closure of elite positions. Growing gender equality and women's increasing access to power positions has also led to intermarriages between top leaders, which exacerbates these effects.

## References

- Bourdieu Pierre (1988) *Homo academicus*. Cambridge:Polity Press.
- Göransson Anita, ed (2005) *Makten och mångfalden. Eliter och etnicitet i Sverige*. Ds 2005:25. Stockholm: Fritzes.
- Göransson Anita, ed (2007) *Maktens kön. Kvinnor och män i den svenska makteliten på 2000-talet*. Nora: Nya Doxa Bokförlag.
- Moi Toril (1991) "Appropriating Bourdieu. Feminist Theory and Pierre Bourdieu's Sociology of Culture". *New Literary History* 22:1017-1049.
- Adkins Lisa & Berverley Skeggs, eds (2006) *Feminism after Bourdieu*. Oxford & Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing/The Sociological Review.

# Chapter 5

## Theme 4-5: Sexual health, embodiment and empowerment. Bridging epistemological gaps

*Nina Lykke & Barbro Wijma, Linköping University*

GEXcel Theme 4-5 will be headed jointly by Nina Lykke, feminist Cultural Studies scholar and Prof. of Gender and Culture, Linköping University, and Barbro Wijma, feminist gynaecologist and Prof. of Gender and Medicine, Linköping University. Two research teams will be constructed - *one led by Lykke and one by Wijma*.

The research team led by Lykke will review different kinds of feminist theorizing of embodied subjectivities, bodies and sexualities, including theories of sexual un/health. The aim is to explore possible synergies between different feminist approaches (queerfeminist theories, sexual difference approaches, posthuman and cyborg feminist theories etc.) which go beyond a dichotomizing of gender and sex, and which look at gender/sex as processes which intersect with processes of racialisation, ethnification, construction of class privilege, geopolitical positioning, (hetero-)normativisation etc.

Moreover, a central dimension of the research will be a close and continuous involvement in the empirical research done by the research team led by Wijma.

The research team led by Wijma will analyse and theorize sexual un/health from three perspectives a) medicine, b) Gender Studies theories and c) theories of ethics. Projects that aim to synthesise the three perspectives will be prioritised. Methodologically the projects should combine critical analysis with implementation of constructive problem solving and evaluation of interventions. -- Key words are: *Male and female bodies; Sexual problems; Gender relations, partner relationships; Norms,*

*needs, rights; Power, communication, abuse/violence, evil, suffering; Adaptation, education, therapy, empowerment.*

We generated the idea for GEXcel Theme 4-5 on inspiration from earlier joint research projects: “Visualisation and simulator-technologies in gynaecological education,” funded by the Swedish Research Council, 2004-07; and “New technology for fetal monitoring: a gender perspective on changes in work organisation, professional boundaries and everyday practices”, funded by the Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research, 2005-07.

While working on these projects, we explored both differences and similarities between our approaches. To do research within the framework of the medical paradigm is very different from doing Cultural Studies research. The epistemological and methodological differences between our ways of working and between the ways in which we have been trained to approach science and articulate scientific problems and research designs are huge. It is easy to line up binaries such as positivism-empiricism versus poststructuralism-postconstructionism and quantitative versus qualitative research in order to depict differences between our scientific starting points. But we both share the belief that the world is more complex than such neat - and reductive - oppositions may reveal. Besides our differences, we share two important commonalities. One is an outspoken critical as well as affirmative-visionary feminist research interest in gender/sex, sexualities, bodies, embodied subjectivities, empowerment, sexual difference, queer identities and anti-normative alternatives. Moreover, we share a firm scientific belief in the huge - and still rather unexplored and understudied - potentials of transdisciplinary research and transversal research dialogues, set up to bridge the epistemological and methodological divides, which today, to a large extent, prevent science from understanding the world in its discursive-material, sociocultural-biological complexity. Against this background, it is our ambition to make theme 4-5 into a joint framework for exploring the potentials and synergies, which we firmly believe can be generated via transversal and transdisciplinary research dialogues.

To introduce our joint ideas as well as our different starting points in more detail, we will, on the following pages, elaborate on the theoretical and empirical contexts from which the ideas for theme 4-5 emerged. *Firstly*, Nina Lykke will account for some links to central discussions in feminist theory and outline how we, against this background, designed the overall framework of theme 4-5. *Secondly*, Barbro Wijma will highlight some examples of empirical studies of sexual un/health and empowerment, carried out by the Division of Gender and Medicine, at the Faculty of Health Sciences, Linköping University. The examples are

selected in order to indicate how this kind of empirical studies may serve as platforms for transversal research dialogues and transdisciplinary perspectives.

We shall underline that all the work, we do together is part of the attempt to bridge the gaps between our different approaches, but that we both think it is important not to gloss over differences. Therefore, the two parts of the text are different, and each author is, at this work-in-progress-stage, only accountable for her own text.

*Nina Lykke:*

### To bridge epistemological gaps. A theoretical contextualisation of Theme 4-5

Feminist research on gender/sex, sexualities, bodies, embodied subjectivities, empowerment, sexual difference, queer identities and anti-normative alternatives have, for decades, been central pivots of feminist research and theorizing. They have attracted the attention of feminist researchers from a broad spectrum of disciplinary backgrounds – from biology and medicine to humanities and social sciences. Different divisions of labour have been at stake here. Sometimes they have created productive tensions, but often mutual misunderstandings, miscommunications and "camps". The goal of theme 4-5 is to try to bridge epistemological and methodological gaps between this kind of different strands of feminist analysis of bodies, embodied subjectivities and sexualities. The idea is to try to maximize productive tensions and synergies between different approaches.

Basically, two research teams will be formed, one with a basis in feminist Cultural Studies and feminist theorizing of embodied subjectivities and another taking its point of departure in a Gender and Medicine perspective and empirical studies of un/healthy bodies and ways to generate bodily empowerment in therapeutical settings. The first group will primarily be composed of humanities and social science scholars and the other, first and foremost, made up of scholars with a background in medicine and biology. The two teams shall, on the one hand, work closely together, but, on the other hand, each of them should be thoroughly grounded in their own field of expertise.

The goal is to create transversal dialogues between the different scientific entrance points of the two research teams. In so doing, an aim is to build on what feminist scholar Marjorie Pryse (2000) has described as disciplinary "rooting" and "shifting". Pryse here transferred a framework, developed by feminist scholar Nira Yuval-Davis (1997) on ways

to construct political affiliations between geopolitically differently located feminist activists, to bear upon generation of synergies across the borders of Cultural Studies and medical paradigms. "Rooting" implies that members of both research teams should be firmly situated in their own disciplinary backgrounds, while "shifting" means that they, at the same time, in a thorough and reflexive manner should try to develop an understanding of the epistemological and methodological why- and how-questions of the other team.

My own entrance point to the analysis of bodies, embodied subjectivities and sexualities is an analytical position that is based on the ontological assumption of inseparability of discourse and materiality, semiotic and material dimensions of the phenomena studied. Here I am in theoretical dialogue with feminist theorists, who are oriented towards postconstructionism, corporeal materialism and theorizing of the posthuman. In particular, I am in conversation with theorists such as eg. Karen Barad, who uses the term "material-discursive" (Barad 2007: 152) and Donna Haraway, who stresses "material-semiotic" approaches (Haraway 1997: 142). Moreover, I am in agreement with the critiques of the sex/gender dichotomy, which different kinds of feminist poststructuralists as well as sexual difference feminist theorists have articulated very strongly and in various ways transgressed theoretically (Butler 1993, Braidotti 1994, Grosz 1994).

I consider discursive-material or material-semiotic ways of theorizing and analysing subjectivities and sexualities to be a very important entrance point to the transdisciplinary collaboration under GEXcel theme 4-5. Such an approach implies working towards theoretical and methodological transgressions of distinctions (be they ontological or "merely" analytical) between discourse and materiality, between semiotic and material dimensions of the phenomena studied.

Following the above mentioned strands of feminist theorizing, I see it as an unintended, but problematic side-effect of distinctions between discourse and materiality that they tend to sustain ontologies which keep up dichotomies between sexed bodies and gendered subjectivities. Due to the performativity and reality producing effects of discourses, including scientific discourses, such distinctions will have a tendency to leave the sexed body out of the theoretical discussion as a statically and pre-given entity, which, in conformity with a heteronormative understanding of gender, is divided up in two "normatively" and "naturally" given kinds, called "women" and "men". The idea is that research under theme 4-5 should challenge this model by looking at the messy spaces where discourse and bodily material agency intersect and interact, and where boundaries between sex and gender are blurred in non-essentializing

ways. The examples from therapeutical practice, which Barbro Wijma lines up in the next section of the article, illustrates very well, how processes of gendering and sexing are entangled and intertwined in ways which make clear-cut distinctions problematic.

To make in-depth explorations of these messy spaces, different expertises and transdisciplinary outlooks are truly important. GEXcel's fellowship programme opens a unique possibility here. It makes it possible to bring different entrance points to the exploration into dialogue with each other and to bridge gaps between different strands of feminist theory and analysis.

One important entrance point is made by the kind of approaches, developed by feminist biologists (eg. Oudshoorn 1994, Birke 1999), medical anthropologists (eg. Martin 1987), science historians (eg. Jordanova 1989, Schiebinger 1993), Cultural Studies scholars (Lykke & Braidotti 1996, Davis 1997, Bryld & Lykke 2000, Franklin, Lury & Stacey 2000, Smelik and Lykke, forthcoming: 2008) who with inspiration from constructionist approaches to science, have theorized changing constructions of sexed bodies in biology and medicine. A somewhat different, but also crucial entrance point is developed by feminist theorists, who have made theorizing of the relations between sex, body, subjectivity, desire, epistemology and ethics a central focus of their research - from sexual difference theorists such as Grosz 1994, Braidotti 1994, to queerfeminist theorists such as Butler 1993 and feminist bio-ethicists (eg. Shildrick 1997). Last, but not least a central entrance point is defined by female medical doctors who, critically, have put focus on bodily health and empowerment (eg. Wijma et al 2003). This latter position will be exemplified in more detail by Barbro Wijma's section in this article.

As these few and selected references should hint at, the focus on embodiment and sexuality has, on the one hand, attracted broad attention among feminist researchers and given rise to crucial theoretical and empirical research developments within the field. Paradoxically enough, it is, on the other hand, also characteristic that these different strands of feminist reflections on bodies and sexualities often have communicated very little with each other. Among others, it is significant that empirically oriented research, carried out by eg. medical researchers, and theoretically oriented research, carried out by eg. philosophers or Cultural Studies scholars have had difficulties in bridging the disciplinary barriers preventing a synergetic dialogue, even though both groups have shared the ambition to include the sexed body and embodied empowerment forcefully into the field of feminist inquiry.

To bridge gaps, constructed by disciplinary boundaries, and to create new synergies and understandings beyond the reductionist dichotomizing of sex and gender, bodily materiality and discourse, it is our ambition that GEXcel theme 4-5 shall attract researchers with excellent records in studies of sexed embodiment, gendered subjectivity and empowerment from different disciplinary perspectives, but with an outspoken ambition to transgress disciplinary barriers and epistemological boundaries - and with a willingness and commitment to experiment with new transdisciplinary methodologies. In particular, it will be considered important to include, on the one hand, researchers with a background in medicine and biology and a high level of knowledge of ways to empower women in clinical and therapeutical situations, and, on the other hand, researchers with a background in the human and social sciences and a high level of knowledge of feminist theories of embodiment.

*Barbro Wijma:*

**Sexual health, embodiment and empowerment.**

**A medical-empirical contextualisation of Theme 4-5**

“Bridging epistemological gaps” - that is a big task. Whether or not it is possible, there is a fantastic chance to pick up the challenge and try it out in studies of “sexual health”.

Within this field there are, on the one hand, several examples of research originating from naturalism, defined as a paradigm that is based on the assumption that “natural laws and/or principles ultimately govern the events of nature, including our bodies, behaviours, and minds” (Slife in Bergin and Garfield, 2004: 45) So what is sexual health? Medically, it may be defined as “the exact order and concentration of the enzymes of the enzymatic cascade in the cells in the walls of the arterioli in the penile cavernous tissue, which takes place as a response to subjectively experienced sexual arousal” (See *Figure 1*). Or it could be defined as the most potent way of communicating that human beings have to come closer to one another, given that sexuality is used optimally.

But sexual health is, on the other hand, also a concept full of embodying norms, values, and ideals. Subordination is not compatible with sexual health, why empowerment is a very relevant field to explore. As sexual interactions mostly involve two persons, the question is “who should be empowered”? Even if empowerment can take place as a “win-win” process in ideal cases (Swift 1987), it is often a process characterised by someone growing at the costs of someone else.

At present, however, we are far from having concrete strategies as to how the epistemological gaps between the two kinds of understanding can be bridged, if ever. But this issue will be further developed by the two teams of researchers to be gathered under GEXcel theme 4-5.

In order to contextualize my entrance point to the exploration of this question, I will give two examples of how empowering processes have been developed within two fields of “sexual health in the medical paradigm”.

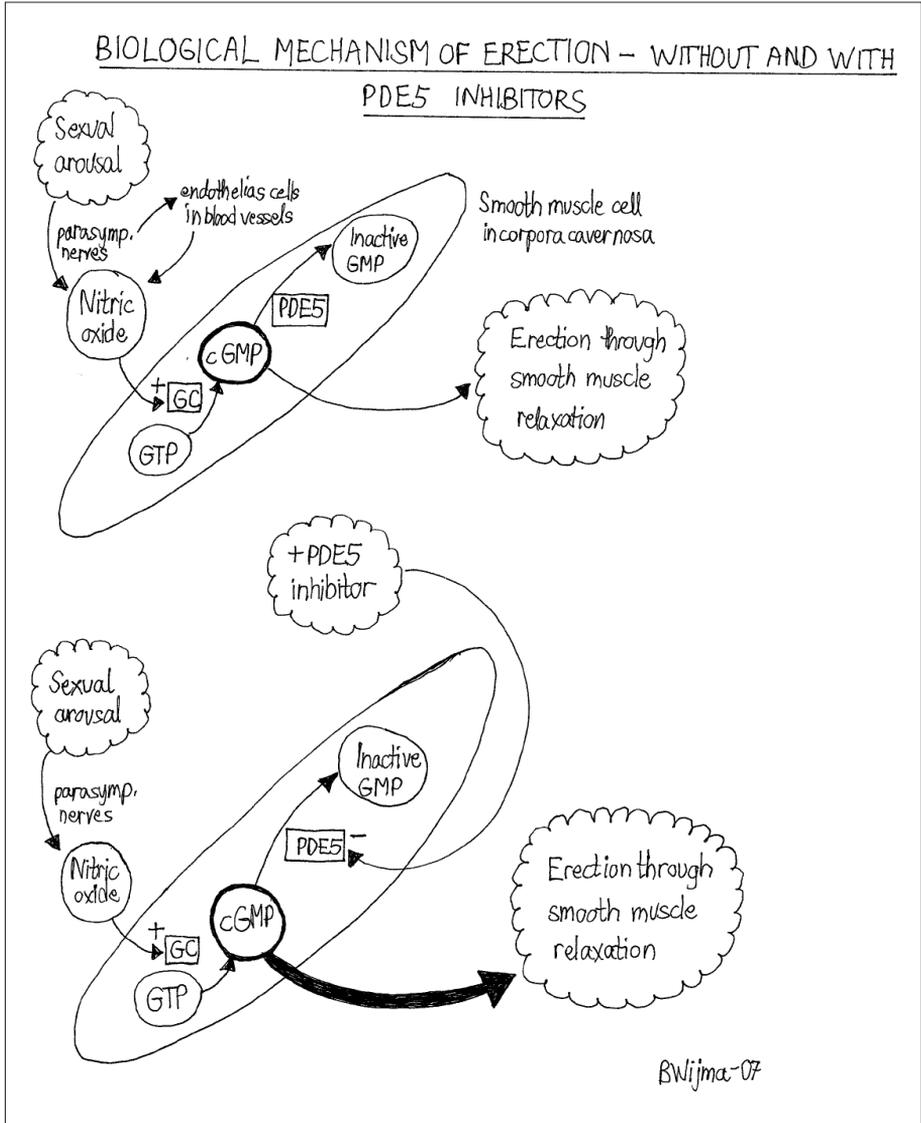


Fig. 1

## 1. Superficial coital pain and vaginismus – Finding alternatives to medical practice

Two common reasons for superficial coital pain will be discussed; vulvar vestibulitis (redefined as provoked vestibulodynia by Moyal-Barraco et al 2004) and partial vaginismus (Wijma et al 1997, American Psychiatric Association 2000).

Women suffering from vulvar vestibulitis have superficial coital pain, localised tender spots at the posterior part of the introitus vaginae and erythema in the vestibule (Friedrich 1987).

Women with partial vaginismus suffer from superficial coital pain, and have a conditioned reflex contracting the pelvic floor muscles at (attempts of) penetration or at the mere thought of a future penetration situation. The reflex was a natural defense reaction, when it first appeared and was learnt, with the function to save the woman from fear or severe pain by stopping penetration. Later, however, when conditioning of the reflex has been established, the reflex will appear also when the woman wishes a penetration and when there is no “danger”. Now the woman has a problem: the reflex, if closing the vagina only partially, will give the woman a severe burning pain during and after penetration. As the coital efforts then usually are interrupted, a vicious spiral is often entered of expectations of pain, experiences of pain, interruptions of coital attempts, increased expectations of pain...

In our studies on partial vaginismus and vulvar vestibulitis (Engman 2007), carried out at the Division of Gender and Medicine at the Faculty of Health Sciences, Linköping University, we found that all women who suffered from vulvar vestibulitis also fulfilled the diagnostic criteria of partial vaginismus (American Psychiatric Association 2000). This is not surprising, as painful intercourse can trigger the vaginismus reflex. More amazing was perhaps the findings that almost all women with vulvar vestibulitis (and partial vaginismus), who had been treated for their partial vaginismus, recovered and were able to have almost painfree and enjoyable intercourse (Engman 2007, paper V). There are some interesting parts of this story, dealing with how the women who were unable to have intercourse felt, how the therapy influenced their self-evaluations, and the hidden potentials of giving words to something unknown, thereby making it possible for an individual to handle it and gain control over it.

The women rated their self-value very low before treatment, not only as sexual partners, but also as women and human beings. Not being able to offer a male partner intercourse was seen as equal to having a very low value in our society *as a human being*. The treatment, meaning that the women regained their ability to have intercourse, effected in a

corresponding way, not only their self-evaluation of themselves as sex partners, but also as women and as human beings (Engman 2007, paper V). Noteworthy is that many of the women with partial vaginismus, and no possibility to offer a male partner intercourse, are depressed at assessment; some severely and with suicidal ideation.

The second interesting part was the effect of putting words to the treatment in all detail and following the process up by drawing very simple figures to illustrate what the effects were of the reflex and what the treatment would result in. After having done that for years, we felt like a CD plate that has been played too many times. As we were teaching the same procedures and steps in similar ways with all patients, the idea arose: could the treatment be manualised and explained to the patient in such detail as to allow her to do the treatment on her own with very little support, maybe only on the telephone or by internet? This far we have tried with approximately 5 women who seem to have no problems to treat themselves. Why is that important? Obviously it has a great impact on the woman's self-esteem and self-value if she has cured herself. If the same thing happened as a result of the therapist's interventions, she would probably feel very thankful to her/him and feel happy that she happened to be one of those who managed to get treatment. But when the medical system "treats" someone who could have managed to cure herself/himself, it is not only bad utilisation of economical and personal resources; it is also immoral and unethical. This type of transfer of knowledge for self-help from the expert to the patient is like giving away the key of the cell to a prisoner. It is also an empowering act, as the patient learns 1) to accept what the situation is like, 2) how to act to change the situation in the desired direction, and 3) how to take control over the needed change of life (Swift 1987). And as the patient has got the key, relapses requiring treatment from the medical system do not occur.

## 2. Learning the pelvic exam – How medical practice could be used/"misused"

Teaching medical students how to perform a pelvic exam (PE) is a challenge. First of all, the patient is usually bothered in the situation and wants it to be over and done. Secondly, the organs to be examined are highly charged with emotions in most women, but as far as the individual patient entering the examination chair is concerned, the examiner does not know which emotions that reign her. Thirdly, the teacher can neither model how to perform the PE procedure nor what the findings are like by i.e. letting the pupil use her/his vision to memorise - as these palpation findings are invisible. Instead, the student needs to imagine

three dimensionally what is being done, where and how. Efforts to solve this teaching dilemma have included examining autopsies, patients in general anaesthesia, mannequins, and simulators. If no efforts at all were undertaken, students were to perform their first pelvic exam on an ordinary, clinical patient, who came to the clinic because of gynaecological problems, and where the student at most could use some extra minutes on doing a PE – not needed for clinical purposes.

A superior model is to use professional patients, i.e. healthy, specially trained women who act as instructors from the patient position in the examination chair. At the Faculty Health Sciences, Linköping University, this model has been used since 1982. Several evaluation studies have demonstrated that the students learn much better how to palpate e.g. the uterus and the ovaries which later, of course, is a prerequisite for their further learning during palpation opportunities offered to them during their clinical clerkship (Siwe et al 2007). The professional patients also teach the students how to behave in a respectful way, by e.g. criticising very concretely behaviour that other patients might feel uneasy with.

When the learning situation of the students first was scrutinised to find ways to ameliorate their learning process, we were struck by the fact that there were no descriptions in readers as to how to perform the procedure. At the most, a textbook in Gynaecology would spend half a page, often including one illustration. When we started to ask ourselves how to tell the students what we were doing, it was like trying to tell someone how you do in all detail, with all separate muscles involved, when you eat soup with a spoon while talking and looking on someone at the other side of the table. The complex movements that we had learnt by trial and error ourselves, had to be deconstructed into many separate, small movements and for each of them we had to decode what we were actually doing when we performed the movement, and put it into words. This was a great piece of work and a long process, which ended up in 2 videos, 2 book chapters in readers, a DVD, a manual, and a pocket booklet; most of them with plenty of illustrations. Describing the method in detail was thus the first step in a process of making the examination procedure available for everyone.

As the professional patients obviously could learn the procedure and the anatomy, we wondered if ordinary patients also could learn more about the exam and profit from their knowledge when later going through a PE. The professional patients moreover gained so much self-esteem from being professional patients (Siwe et al 2006) that we also assumed that part of the process could also be used in relation to the ordinary patients. The way to reach there would be to let ordinary patients learn more about the anatomy of the pelvis and about the PE procedure

itself. As part of a study, we let clinical patients take part in a lecture session about the PE, which included performing a PE themselves on a simulator (E-pelvis). After having gone through a planned consultation at the clinic including a PE they were interviewed. The knowledge they had gained had lowered their fear, increased their curiosity as regards the exam and the findings, and enabled them to take an active part in the interaction during the exam (Siwe 2007, paper IV).

The use/misuse of medical practice could be exemplified in many ways in these trials:

- As the procedure was described in all details and demystified, it became available to everyone, even so for the ordinary patient.

- All along the learning sessions and in all teaching material produced, we only used common Swedish words. This also made the ordinary patient a legitimate user of the teaching material, the vocabulary, and the knowledge accumulated.

- The common, but unspoken over-belief in the value of expensive technology in medical teaching was questioned.

- The power structure of the learning situation was turned “upside down”: the patient is the teacher and supervisor and the examiner, the future physician, is the pupil. The obvious advantage for the student of this position is that she/he does not have to pretend to be knowledgeable at the same time as she/he has to learn a new skill from the very beginning.

There is plenty of empowerment in the situation - for the professional patient, for the student learning to perform a PE, and for the ordinary patient who goes through a learning session. But what about the supervising gynaecologist? She/he will probably feel very confident and get an increased trust in her/his capacity to handle this delicate situation in a way which finally will benefit all the participants.

## References

- American Psychiatric Association (2000): *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders*. 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Washington DC: American Psychiatric Association.
- Barad, Karen (2007): *Meeting the Universe Halfway*. London, Durham: Duke UP.
- Birke, Lynda (1999): *Feminism and the Biological Body* Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP.
- Braidotti, Rosi (1994): *Nomadic Subjects. Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, New York: Columbia UP.
- Bryld, Mette and Lykke, Nina (2000): *Cosmodolphins. Feminist Cultural Studies of Technology, Animals and the Sacred*. London: ZED Books.
- Butler, Judith (1993): *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. New York: Routledge.
- Davis, Kathy, ed. (1997): *Embodied Practices. Feminist Perspectives on the Body*. London: Sage.
- Engman, Maria (2007): *Partial vaginismus – definition, symptoms and treatment*. Linköping: Linköping University (Doctoral thesis).
- Franklin, Sarah, Celia Lury, Jackie Stacey (2000): *Global Nature, Global Culture*. London: Sage.
- Friedrich EG Jr (1987): Vulvar vestibulitis syndrome. *Journal of Reproductive Medicine* 1987; 32: 110-4.
- Grosz, Elizabeth (1994): *Volatile Bodies. Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Indiana UP, Bloomington 1994.
- Haraway, Donna (1997): *Modest\_Witness@Second\_Millennium. FemaleMan©\_MeetsOncoMous™. Feminism and Technoscience*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Jordanova, Ludmilla (1989): *Sexual Visions. Images of Gender in Science and Medicine between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. New York, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

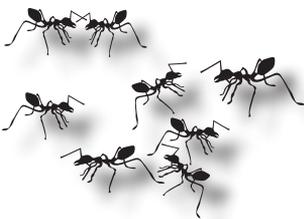
- Lykke, Nina and Rosi Braidotti (eds, 1996): *Between Monsters, Goddesses and Cyborgs. Feminist Confrontations with Science, Medicine and Cyberspace*. London: ZED Books.
- Martin, Emily (1987): *The Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Moyal-Barracco M and Lynch PJ (2004): 2003 ISSVD terminology and classification of vulvodynia: a historical perspective. *Journal of Reproductive Medicine* 2004; 49: 772-7.
- Oudshoorn, Nelly (1994): *Beyond the Natural Body. An Archeology of Sex Hormones*. London and New York: Routledge
- Pryse, Marjorie (2000): "Trans/Feminist Methodology: Bridges to Interdisciplinary Thinking". *NWSA Journal* 12, 2, 105-118.
- Schiebinger, Londa (1993): *Nature's Body. Gender in the Making of Modern Science*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Shildrick, Margrit (1997): *Leaky Bodies and Boundaries. Feminism, Postmodernism and (Bio)ethics*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Siwe, Karin (2007): *Learning the pelvic exam*. Linköping: Linköping University (Doctoral thesis).
- Siwe, Karin, Wijma Barbro and Berterö Carina (2006): A stronger and clearer perception of self. Women's experience of being professional patients in teaching the pelvic examination: a qualitative study. *British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology* 2006; 113(8): 890-5.
- Siwe, Karin, Wijma Klaas, Stjernquist Martin and Wijma Barbro (2007): *Medical students learning the pelvic examination: Comparison of outcome in terms of skills between a professional patient and a clinical patient model*. *Patient Education and Counseling* 2007; 68(3): 211-7.
- Slife, Brent (2004): Theoretical challenges to therapy practice and research: The constraint of naturalism. In: Bergin and Garfield: *Handbook of psychotherapy and behavior change*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Lambert Michael editor). Wiley.
- Smelik, Anneke and Nina Lykke (eds, forthcoming 2008): *Bits of Life. Feminism at the Intersections of Media, Bioscience and Technology*. Seattle and London: Washington UP.
- Swift, C and Levin G (1987): Empowerment: An emerging mental health technology. *Journal of Primary prevention* 1987; 8: 71-94.
- Wijma, Barbro, Berit Schei and Katarina Swahnberg et al. (2003): "Emotional, physical, and sexual abuse in patients visiting gynaecology clinics: A Nordic crosssectional study". *Lancet* 2003; 361(21) 2107-13.

Yuval-Davis, Nira (1997): *Gender & Nation*. London: Sage.

Wijma Barbro and Wijma Klaas (1997): A cognitive behavioural treatment model of vaginismus. *Scandinavian Journal of Behaviour Therapy* 1997; 26:145-156.



Other Conference Papers from  
GEXcel Kick off Conference





# Chapter 6

## Gender, Diversity and Transnational Citizenship

*Birte Siim, Aalborg University*

The paper addresses the intersections between diversity and gender equality from a citizenship frame. It discusses two related challenges: One is to combine visions of gender equality with respect for cultural diversity. This issue is addressed in political and gender theory (Okin, 1999; Eisenberg et al. 2005). The other is to combine universalism with diversity/particularism. This issue is addressed in comparative research for example on gender and citizenship (Lister et al 2007).

Globalization, increased migration and multiculturalism represent a major theoretical and political challenge to gender equality because of the increased diversity in and between the national, trans-national and global arenas. Many of the classical concepts in social and political theory, like democracy, citizenship, the welfare state, feminism have been tied to the nation state and even some of the new concepts like intersectionality. Feminist research in the new century therefore needs to go beyond what has been called methodological nationalism and understand how gender and diversity at the national level is linked to globalization– not only from a political perspective as international feminist – but also on a conceptual level.

There is an increasing feminist awareness of diversity and about the intersections of gender and other kinds of diversities attached for example to ethnicity/race, sexuality and class. Feminist scholarship has recently started to debate the intersections of globalisation, multiculturalism and gender equality (Lister 2007). Feminist scholars have been divided in their perceptions of what is the meaning of multiculturalism and diversity and what are the consequences for feminism, gender equality and women's rights. The main point in this paper is that in order to

understand the intersections of gender and diversity we need to overcome the dominant methodological nationalism and conceptualize trans-nationalism – for example trans-national democracy, citizenship, agency and feminisms.

The trans-national concept refers to the intersections between the local, national and the global arenas. Citizenship is about rights and obligations, identities and practices, and it must be understood both as a contextual concept and as a lived experience (see Lister 2007). At the national level citizenship is divided in two dimensions, an external dimension that refers to rules about access to the country for so called “foreigners” and an internal dimension that refers to inclusion/integration of the people living legally in the country. Citizenship is multilayered and the spaces of citizenship stretch from the domestic sphere through the national and European level to the global. Trans-nationalist citizenship refers to rules beyond the boundaries of the nation state, for example in the EU, and the trans-national space is the space beyond the limits of the nation state. Trans-nationalism challenges established research paradigms connected to the nation states and arguably the challenge for trans-national feminism is to focus on women’s social and political agency in a globalizing context

In the following I first look at feminist debates about multiculturalism. Secondly I look at the intersections of gender and diversity in the Nordic countries. The conclusion returns to the multilevel and trans-national conceptualisations of citizenship. It reflects on models to overcome the tensions in social justice between universal equality and the particularism of places and spaces and between gender equality and cultural recognition.

## **Feminist debates about multiculturalism and globalisation**

Multiculturalism is contested and one question is whether multiculturalism and increased cultural diversity among women represent a threat or a challenge to gender equality (see Siim 2003, 2006; 2007) One of the central themes in international feminist research has been the dilemma in women’s struggles for equal citizenship between claims for equal rights and claims based upon gender difference. Feminist theory has addressed the linkage between the democratic struggles of women and ethnic minority groups. Many theories were premised on beliefs in women’s common interest ‘as women’ and to some extent also among women and other marginalised social groups. Political theory has analysed the inclusion of women and marginalised social groups in democracy and

has conceptualised women's agency. For example, the work of two influential scholars Iris Marion Young and Anne Phillips, who have conceptualised a 'politics of difference' (Young 1990, 2000) and the 'politics of presence' (Phillips 1995) and have both introduced strategies to include women in democracy based upon an alliance between women and marginalised groups.

This alliance between women and ethnic minority groups in their struggles for equal citizenship, democracy and justice was challenged by the American political scientist Susan Moller Okin. In a provocative essay titled: "Is multiculturalism bad for women?" originally printed in the *Boston Review* (1999). Her work has been influential, also in the Nordic countries (see Mørck 2002), and it placed the relationship between multiculturalism and gender equality on the research agenda.

According to Okin, feminism is a paradigm for women's rights based on the claim that men and women are moral equals "that women should not be discriminated against because of their sex that they should be recognized as human beings with a dignity of the same value as men's and that they should have the same possibilities to live a life as rich and freely as men" (Okin, 1999;10). This is contrasted with multiculturalism, which she defines as protection of cultural diversity "the claim that minority cultures or ways of life... should also be respected through special group rights or privileges", for example the right to polygamous marriages or guaranteed political representation (Okin, 1999;10).

The claim that there is a contradiction between multiculturalism, defined as protection of the cultural rights of minorities, and women's rights provoked an intense debate in the US and the main contributions were later published in a book under the same title (Okin, Cohen et al 1999). Okin's article was interpreted as a sharp attack on the multicultural paradigm and group rights from a liberal feminist perspective. The claim was that group rights such as forced marriages are potentially and, in many cases in practice, anti-feminist and harmful for women. First, group rights strengthen men's patriarchal control over women in minority cultures, and second it is the most powerful men who formulate the interests, values and practices of the group.

The debate about Okin's essay (1999) illustrates that the definition of multiculturalism is contested, because it refers both to theories about minority rights and to a pattern characteristic of migration and integration policies, for example the right to teaching in your mother-tongue, as well as to normative positions that emphasise the recognition of cultural diversity. Okin's definition emphasises protection of cultural diversity. This contrasts with her opponents definition of multiculturalism as "the

radical idea that people of other cultures, foreign or domestic, are human beings, too – moral equals, entitled to equal respect and concern, not to be discounted or treated as a subordinate cast” (Okin, Cohen et al 1999; 4).

The book gives an overview of dominant positions in the debate about gender and multiculturalism: while Okin’s (feminist) position gives priority to gender equality over ethnic equality, the dominant liberal position prioritises ethnic equality over gender (Parekh, 1999; 69-75). Will Kymlicka’s approach in many ways represents a third position that intends to combine individual and collective rights, and his concept of a multicultural citizenship (1995) differentiates between two kinds of group rights, external protections and internal restrictions. This position defends collective rights that protect minorities against the majority through external restrictions, for example language rights, and is against collective rights that impose ‘internal’ restrictions of individual rights/autonomy within the group (1999; 31-34). I agree with Kymlicka’s claim that feminism and multiculturalism are potential allies in a struggle for a more inclusive concept of justice based upon a combination of individual and collective rights that takes account of both gender-based and ethnic diversity. I find that the relation between gender-based and ethnic diversity as well as between individual and collective rights need to be explored further. Group rights have not been connected solely to minorities. Claims for gender equality include both individual and collective rights, for example affirmative action and gender balance in representation.

Okin’s contribution points towards real dilemmas and she was surely right in identifying a tension between multiculturalism and women’s rights, but her approach to multiculturalism has been criticised from different perspectives (see Eisenberg 2005). I find Okin’s approach to culture, ethnicity and power problematic because it tends to perceive culture as the universal explanation of women’s oppression and to treat family and religion mainly as elements in men’s patriarchal control over women’s reproduction and sexuality. From that perspective women are perceived primarily as ‘bearers of culture’ and not as ‘transformers of culture’ and as social and political actors.

From a more social constructivist approach, culture is not universal but an arena for dynamic negotiations not only between the majority and the minorities but also within minorities (Phillips 2005). From a deliberative democratic perspective, women and minorities are social and political actors and I suggest that it is fruitful to explore their struggles for recognition, alongside the meaning of religion and the family, further through historical and cross-national studies (see Hobson 2003).

There is an intense debate in political theory about the relationship between universal rights and cultural particularism and a growing concern framed as "the paradox of multicultural vulnerability" (that vulnerable social groups' needs and interests can be undermined by group rights) (Schacher 2001), especially about ensuring that women and other vulnerable groups have a voice and influence both in minority cultures and in society (see for example Eisenberg et. Al. 2005; Modood et. al.2006). It is emphasised that women in minority cultures need to be respected both as culturally different from the majority in society and to be treated as equals by both the majority and minority cultures. Okin has in a later article "No simple questions – no simple answers" (2005) emphasised that she is not against collective rights per se, and she has specified and contextualised her position somewhat. The debate illustrates that political and gender theory is getting more sensitive to the contextual nature of conflicts and cultural clashes between religious and family values, including the intersections between gender and ethnicity (see Phillips 2005).

The debate also illustrates that liberal theorists generally give priority to principles of ethnic/racial equality above gender equality. In much feminist literature gender equality takes priority and Anne Phillips has recently noted that gender equality becomes a non-negotiable condition for any practices of multiculturalism (Phillips 2005; 115). She suggests that the key problems for minorities within minorities may be those that arise from the perspective of the political activist rather than those of the constitutional lawyer, or even the deliberative democrat (134). I agree that problems of how to negotiate gender equality with recognition of cultural diversity are democratic problems that should be solved by negotiations. I would emphasise that they arise both from the perspective of the deliberative democrat and the political activist. I find that one way to advance the debate about feminism and multiculturalism is through comparative research that explores the intersections of gender equality and cultural recognition of ethnic minority women cross-nationally by looking at the intersections between political institutions, agency and identities (Lister et al. 2007).

## The multicultural challenge to the Nordic gender model

Globalisation and migration represent new political and theoretical challenges to the Nordic model often perceived to be a model for social equality, democratic citizenship and gender equality (Siim 2007). The increased diversity in the populations and the subsequent marginalisation of migrants and refugees on the labour market, in politics and society represents serious problems for the Nordic citizenship and gender models.

The Nordic welfare states are said to belong to the same welfare and gender model (Hernes 1987), but they have different approaches to migration with Sweden being the only country that has officially adopted a multicultural politics (Hedetoft et. al, 2006). In spite of this, research indicate that the key problem in all the Nordic countries is 'failed integration' (Brochmann and Hageman 2004).

Arguably the increased cultural diversity among women represents a special challenge to the Nordic gender model, which, since Helga Maria Hernes' influential book, *The Welfare State and Women Power* (1987), has been praised by many feminist scholars for its 'women-friendly' potentials (Borchorst & Siim 2002). Hernes defined state feminism as the combination of inclusion 'from below' through political participation and inclusion 'from above' in political institutions, and research confirmed that women's political participation and inclusion in the political elite since the 1970s represents one of the most radical changes in political institutions and political cultures in Nordic democracies (see Bergqvist et. al. 1999).

Critics claim that the Nordic gender equality model needs re-formulation in the new post-national era. Feminist scholars have challenged the normative assumptions behind universal welfare states from the perspective of migrant women (Los Reyes, Molina & Mulinari 2003), and the principle of 'women-friendliness' has been criticized from a post-colonial diversity perspective because it hides diversity among and between women (Mulinari 2006). It is possible to identify a main tension in Nordic feminist research between the more structuralist approaches, for example represented by Yvonne Hirdman's influential concept of the gender system (1990) based upon segregation and hierarchy, and the more institutional approaches, for example represented by Helga Maria Hernes (1987) and her influential concepts about the Scandinavian welfare states as potential 'women-friendliness' and 'state feminism'. Arguably both frames are based upon a premise about women's common interests 'as women'.

Feminist scholarship has started to analyse whether state feminism has contributed to strengthen the claims for recognition of ethnic minority women and to what extent democratic opportunity structures are open to all women (Siim 2003; 2006; Skjeie 2006). In spite of Danish exceptionalism on migration and family-unification, studies of the lived citizenship of ethnic minority women has identified common problems connected to the Nordic gender equality norm, women's rights and multiculturalism (Bredal, 2005; Siim, 2007). They indicate that there are limits to welfare and illustrate that the women-friendly social policies do not include all women (De los Reyes & Mulinari, 2005).

In a recent investigation of gender equality policies and multiculturalism in Sweden, Denmark and Norway, Trude Langvasbråten (2006) concludes that neither the Swedish, Danish nor Norwegian gender equality policies can legitimately claim to live up to Hernes' vision of 'women-friendly societies', where injustice on the basis of gender would be eliminated without an increase in other forms of inequalities, such as among groups of women (Hernes 1987; 15).

Today there is clearly a need to develop new understandings, frames and concepts to understand the new multicultural reality. I find that it is a gender-political challenge to confront the old frames with the new cultural diversity among women and a theoretical challenge to develop new frames and concepts in the Nordic welfare states that acknowledges the cultural diversity of women. Migrant women are marginalised on the labour market, in the public arena as well as in relation to democratic politics. New important questions are: who has the power to represent whom and who has the power to define women's interests and the meaning of feminism and gender equality.

The concept of intersectionality is one of the ways to conceptualize the new cultural diversity among women. However, intersectionality is also contested and the concept has many meanings in different theoretical frames (see Christensen & Siim 2007). It was developed in the US and the UK by black feminists as a way to articulate intersections between gender and race/ethnicity, and it has been taken over by post-structuralists and post-colonialists scholars in the Nordic countries. As a consequence scholars focus both on dominant discourses, on individual identities and on social structures, for example on the intersections of racism and capitalism as social systems. I have recently argued that it is important to develop a framework able to build bridges between micro-studies focusing on individual identities and macro-studies focusing on social structures (Christensen & Siim 2006). One alternative to the existing dualism are frames that focuses on the institutional meso-level, for example on the interactions of frame analysis and claim analysis (Hobson 2003).

There are examples of feminists that have employed relatively sophisticated frames that include the dynamic relations between structures, institutions and subjectivity (Christensen & Siim, 2006). One example is Beverly Skeggs (1997) who differentiates between three levels of discourses, a) abstract discourses embedded in social institutions like education and the media, b) specific discourses developed in social movements and trade unions and c) concrete discourses often connected with specific experiences of individual women. Another example is Nira Yuval-Davis (2005), who suggests that social differences can be analysed on three

different levels that all include material and symbolic meanings: a) an institutional- and organisational level including state institutions and legislation, b) a relational level that concerns power and love relations both on a formal and informal level, c) representative level related to texts, pictures symbols and ideologies.

I suggest that Nordic feminist research needs to reflect critically upon the roots of the concept as well as on the tensions connected to the different levels. Intersectionality is a travelling concept that has been taken over by poststructuralists and post-colonialist scholars in the Nordic countries. I find that it would be useful to contextualize the concept from a cross-national perspective because the relation between different categories and forms of inequality are different in different welfare, citizenship and gender regimes. The implication is feminist scholars should start to reflect upon intersectionality from a Nordic context. The intersections between the key categories, for example between gender and ethnicity/race, are different in the Nordic welfare and gender regimes than in the US and the UK. Arguably the US has a strong tradition for recognition of cultural diversity but a relatively weak tradition for equality, whereas the Nordic countries have a strong tradition for equality, including gender equality, and a relatively weak tradition for recognition of cultural diversity.

## Gender justice, diversity and equality – intersections of local, national and global

In the final section I return to the implications of the multileveled and trans-national conceptualizations of citizenship. I look at how the feminist models overcome tensions in gender justice between diversity and equality and discuss to what extent they conceptualize the trans-national arena. Feminist scholarship has introduced a number of models to overcome the tensions between different principles of justice, for example equality and recognition of diversity and between universalism and the particularism of gender and diversity. One example is Carole Pateman's ideal about a "gender differentiated citizenship" capable of integrating women's and men's differences in public life, e.g. by making care for children a public responsibility (1989). Another more recent example is Ruth Lister's suggestion that the tension between gender equality and post-modern diversity is a creative tension that can be overcome in practice through the notion of "differentiated universalism" (2003; 9).

Arguably gender justice refers to the links between local, national and trans-national demands about cultural recognition and redistribution and representation. The two different principles of justice must be linked

within theoretical frames as well as in practical politics. A major issue is to link women's recognition struggles with redistribution of resources from men to women within and between countries. Claims for recognition based upon respect and valuation of group difference, and claims for redistribution based on a fairer and a more equal division of resources are both principles that belong to different frames of justice that are analytically distinct (Fraser 1997). The growing emphasis on claims for recognition and recognition struggles has been interpreted as a paradigmatic shift away from claims for redistribution. In practice there is often a dynamic interplay between the different dimensions and research has illuminated the many ways struggles for recognition and redistribution are often intertwined (Hobson 2003). Nancy Fraser's theoretical frame of social justice intends to combine cultural recognition with economic redistribution and she has recently argued that the principle of equal representation represents a third political dimension of justice (2003).

Citizenship includes equal rights, cultural recognition as well as participation and representation in democratic politics and strategies to link the different dimensions of justice are not universal but contextual. Comparative research has started to analyse how the different citizenship and gender regimes influence the intersections between multiculturalism as the recognition of cultural difference on the one hand and the struggle for gender equality and women's rights on the other hand.

The Nordic countries represent a special case: They have similar citizenship and gender regimes and in spite of different approaches to migration and integration, they also have similar problems with the social and political marginalisation of ethnic minorities. Feminist studies have started to analyze the new intersections of gender, race and ethnicity and to raise critical questions about who has the power and authority to represent women and define the movements' objectives and strategy. Feminist scholarship has recently identified common tensions and conflicts between the Nordic gender equality policies and respect for cultural diversity. The studies indicate that the strong tradition for gender equality has made it difficult to recognise the cultural diversity of ethnic minority women. As a result neither the Swedish, Danish nor Norwegian gender equality policies can claim to live up to the requirement of the feminist vision for 'women-friendly' societies that should be non-discriminatory and include all women.

There has been a hierarchy of rights and it is contested how to link the different rights in practice. Liberal frames generally have given priority to cultural rights, especially religious, over women's rights and gender equality, while feminist scholars often give priority to gender equality over cultural equality and have tended to made gender equality a non-

negotiable condition for multiculturalist practices. A main issue is thus to develop policies and strategies capable of bridging claims for gender equality with claims for cultural diversity. Arguable the universal discourse about gender equality, women's and human rights must be interpreted in the light of cultural diversity and with sensitivity to particular contexts, including the diversity of spaces, places and social groups. It follows that strategies involve democratic negotiations and dialogues between social and political actors with all relevant parties represented. It is a challenge for feminist research to develop gender theories and strategies sensitive to the intersections of gender and ethnicity, premised on both gender equality and ethnic equality and on recognition of cultural diversity and to link struggles at the national and trans-national levels.

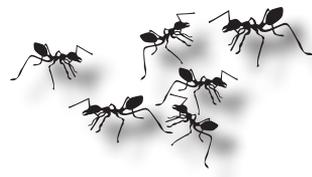
## References

- Bergqvist C., A. Borchorst, A.D. Christensen, N. Raaum, V. Ramnstedt-Silén, A. Styrkasdottir. Eds. (1999): *Equal Democracies? Gender and Politics in the Nordic Countries*. Oslo: University Press.
- Borchorst, Anette, Birte Siim (2002): "The women-friendly welfare state revisited" pp 90-98 In: *NORA, Nordic Journal of Women's Studies*. No. 2, vol. 10.
- Bredal, Anja (2005): "Tackling Forced Marriages in the Nordic Countries: Between Women's Rights and Immigration Control". In: L. Welchman and S. Hossain (eds), *Honour Crimes. Paradigms and Violence against Women*. London: Zed Books.
- Brochmann, Grethe, Anniken Hagelund (2005): *Innvandringens velferdspolitiske konsekvenser. Nordisk kunnskapsstatus*. Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers.
- Christensen, Ann-Dorte & Birte Siim, (2006): "Fra køn til diversitet – interseksjonalitet i en dansk/nordisk kontekst". In: *Kvinder, Køn & Forskning*, 2-3.
- Cohen, Joshua, Matthew Howard and Martha Nussbaum (1999): "Introduction, Feminism, Multiculturalism and Human Equality". *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* In: Okin, Susan Moller with Respondents. Ed. Joshua Cohen, Matthew Howard and Martha Nussbaum. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp 3-5.
- De los Reyes, Paulina, Irene Molina & Diana Mulinary (2003): *Maktens olika förklädnader. Kön, klass och etnicitet i det postkoloniala Sverige*. Stockholm: Atlas
- Eisenberg, Avigail, Jeff Spinner Halev (2005): *Introduction, Minorities within minorities. Equality, Rights and Diversity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fraser Nancy, Axel Honneth (2003): *Redistribution or recognition? A political-philosophical exchange*. London/New York: Verso.
- Fraser, Nancy. (1997): *Justice Interruptions. Critical Reflections on the "Post-socialist" Condition*. London: Routledge.

- Hedetoft, Ulf, Petersson, Bo, Sturfelt, Lina. Eds. (2006): *Invandrare och integration I Danmark och Sverige*. Göteborg, Stockholm: Makadam.
- Hobson, Barbara ed. (2003): *Recognition Struggles and Social Movements. Contested Identities, Agency and Power*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Hernes, Helga Maria (1987): *The Welfare State and Women Power*. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.
- Hirdman, Yvonne (1990): "Genussystemet". In: *Demokrati och Makt i Sverige. Maktutredningen huvudrapport*, SOU: 1990: 44, Stockholm, pp. 73-114.
- Hirdman, Yvonne (1996): "Key Concepts in Feminist Theory. Analyzing Gender and Welfare". *Freia*, paper 34. Aalborg University.
- Kymlicka, Will (1999): "Liberal complacencies". In: Okin, Susan Moller with Respondents. *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* Princeton: Princeton University Press. pp. 31-34
- Langvasbråten, Trude, (forthcoming): "A Scandinavian model? – Gender Equality Policy and Multiculturalism in Sweden, Denmark and Norway 2000-2005". In: *Social Politics*.
- Lister, Ruth (2003): *Citizenship. Feminist Perspectives*. Macmillan, London.
- Lister, Ruth, F. Williams, A. Antonnen, J. Bussemaker, U. Gerhard, J. Heinen, S. Johansson, A. Leira, B. Siim (2007): *Gendering Citizenship in Western Europe. New Challenges for Citizenship research in a cross-national context*. London: Policy Press
- Modood, Tariq Anna Triandafyllidou and Richards Zapata-Barrero. Eds. (2005): *Multiculturalism, Muslims and Citizenship. A European Approach*. London: Routledge.
- Mulinari, Diana (2006): "Women friendly? Understanding gendered racism in Sweden". In: *Gender Equality as a Perspective on Welfare: The Limits of Political Ambition*. Eds. Carlsson-Wetterberg, Christina, Kari Melby, Anna-Birte Ravn. Nordic Council of Ministers.
- Mørck, Yvonne (2002): "Multikulturalismens kønsblinde øje. Mangfoldighedsudfordringer og kønsligestilling". In: *Dansk Sociologi*, vol. 13, nr. 3, pp. 7-25.
- Okin, Susan Moller, Joshua Cohen, Matthew Howard and Martha C. Nussbaum (1999): *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* Princeton UP, Princeton.

- Okin, Susan Moller (1999/2005): "Multiculturalism and feminism: no simple question, no simple answers". In: *Minorities within minorities. Equality, Rights and Diversity*. Eds. Eisenberg, Avigail, Jeff Spinner Halev. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp 67-89.
- Parekh, Bhikhu (1999): "A Varied Moral World". *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* In: Okin, Susan Moller with Respondents. Princeton: Princeton University Press. pp. 69-76
- Pateman, Carole (1988): *The Sexual Contract*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Phillips, Anne (2005): "Dilemmas of Gender and Culture: the Judge, the Democrat, and the Political activist". In: *Minorities within minorities. Equality, Rights and Diversity*. Eds. Eisenberg, Avigail, Jeff Spinner Halev. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp113-134.
- Skeggs, Beverly (1997): *Formations of Class and Gender*. Sage Publications, London.
- Siim, Birte (2003): *Medborgerskabets udfordringer – belyst ved politisk myndiggørelse af etniske minoritetskvinder*. Århus; Århus Universitetsforlag.
- Siim, Birte (2006): "The Challenge of Recognizing Diversity from the Perspective of Gender Equality – Dilemmas in Danish citizenship", In: *CRISPP – Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*. (forthcoming).
- Siim, Birte (2007). "Dilemmas of citizenship – tensions between gender equality and respect for diversity in the Danish welfare state", in Christina, Kari Melby & Anna-Birte Ravn eds. *Gender Equality as a Perspective on Welfare: The Limits of Political Ambition*. The Nordic Council of Ministers (forthc.).
- Skjeie, Hege (2006): "Religious Exemptions to Equality". In: *Critical Revue of International Social and Political Philosophy (CRISPP)* forthc.
- Young, Iris Marion (1990): *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Young, Iris Marion (2000): *Inclusion and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Yuval-Davis, Nira (2006): "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics". In: *European Journal of Women's Studies*, vol 13, 3, pp 193-209.





## Chapter 7

# Women's Commonality and Social Change

*Elzbieta H. Oleksy, University of Łódź*

The word “commonality” in the title of this paper is old-fashioned on purpose. Before I explain, let me begin with two “close-ups” from literature: Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and Iris Murdoch’s *The Nice and the Good*.

In Hurston’s metaphorical novel, Janie – a Mulatta also known as Alphabet for the different names white folks have been giving her – discovers her identity while looking at a photograph. Gazing at the picture of all white children but one, taken on the farm where she has been living with her grandma, Janie can’t find her own image and asks: “where is me? Ah don’t see me.” The white folks laugh and someone points to the dark face on the photograph and says: “Dat’s you, Alphabet, don’t you know yo’ ownselfe?” And Janie exclaims: “Aw, aw! Ah’m colored!” (1978 [first published in 1937], 21).

In one of the episodes on the Dorset coast in Murdoch’s theory laden novel, eccentric Uncle Theo is watching his sister’s twin children play on the beach. He takes no pleasure from the situation: he is annoyed by the noise the children make but what disturbs him most is the multitude of pebbles on the beach. As if twinness of his kin were not already enough of an existential irritation, the multiplicity of pebbles horrifies Theo:

The pebbles gave a general impression of being either white or mauve, but looked at closely they exhibited almost every intermediate colour and also varied in size and shape. All were rounded, but some were flattish, some oblong, some spherical; some were almost transparent, others more or less copiously speckled, other close-textured and nearly black, a few of a brownish-red, some of a pale grey, others of a purple which

was almost blue. ... These stones, which brought such pleasure to the twins, were a nightmare to Theo. Their multiplicity and randomness appalled him. (Murdoch 1977 [first published in 1968], 153-154).

This horror could be pacified only if Theo convinced himself that they are all examples of one species: pebblehood.

If Hurston may be said to have invented, in the mid-1930s, the concept, which has been the backbone of contemporary identity theories, Elizabeth Spelman, from whose *Inessential Woman. Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought* (1988) I borrowed the “pebblehood” metonymy, was one of the first critics who maintained that much of Western feminist theory has been written from Uncle Theo’s/theocratic perspective. Spelman says: “... not just the manyness of women but also all the differences among us are disturbing, threatening to the sweet intelligibility of the tidy and irrefutable fact that all women are women” (2). From such a perspective, adds Spelman, “this fact about women is more important than those facts about us that distinguish us from one another” (2).

Abundant recent publications on race, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, gender, age, class, etc., only reiterate that these social differentials should be seen not as isolated or cumulative but as intertwining, intersecting, and interlocking – in Janice Radway’s phrase, as “intricate interdependencies” (1999, 9) or as “intersectionalities,” a term more commonly used in Europe. Much of this work deals with the social and cultural construction of the subject as it is discussed in feminist and pro-feminist work on gender (inclusive of discussions on men and masculinities), queer studies, and anti-racist studies of race and ethnicity. By detaching the issue of difference from various essentialisms, be they biological, national or cultural, it marks a critical theoretical departure from previous definitions of identity and explores, in the words of Radway, “the complex, intersecting ways in which people are embedded within multiple, conflicted discourses, practices, and institutions” (1999, 9).

With such a change of emphasis came the shift from theorizing on identities in common, that is to say, from commonality and inclusion, from shared experience to its opposite: exclusiveness and taking subject positions, not necessarily accounting for exceptions and transgressions. In feminist theory, for example, the emphasis on commonality of women’s experience worldwide brought the questioning of the second wave of women’s rights activism. Black commentators in particular challenged those varieties of feminism, which perceive the roots of women’s predicament exclusively in their disproportionate access to the means of production, characteristic of wealthy Western civilizations. Disclosing

material foundations of women's social submission, as well as the relationship between the mode of production and women's status – goals advocated by Marxist feminists – fails to embrace the experience of black women, who, similarly to women in numerous East European countries, have traditionally had access to the means of production (see Oleksy 2005 and 2006).

To somewhat complicate this discussion, however, I will turn now to Naomi Zack's book *Inclusive Feminism. A Third Wave of Women's Commonality which criticises feminist theories of intersectionality* and claims that "second wave feminists were too hasty to accept the collapse of their edifice" (2) Zack suggests that feminists should listen to one another; "needed," she says, is "not some impossible common tongue by a common ear" (141).

Such arguments have not been uncommon. Nancy Fraser (1997), for instance, has posed them in reference to the pluralistic version of multiculturalism which replaced the essentialist perception of women as homogenous category with equally essentialist views about generalised cultural categories. She postulates an antiessentialist version of multiculturalism where cultural differences are not essentialised and thus able to enhance feminist politics to oppose fundamentalisms.

Zack's and Fraser's inferences carry a profound resonance for some "new" member states of the European Union, hereafter called Enwise countries. The on-going debate on the exclusionary character of the theories created within the second wave of feminism and the new theories that came in the wake of the debunking of the old ones, make it necessary for feminists from the Enwise countries to consider the implications these ideas carry for the social change affecting women therein.

Using Poland as the case study, I will make a claim that women lost a possibility of organizing on a large scale precisely because, as Zack says, we could not listen to one another and recognise our "commonality across [our] differences as a basis for [our] ongoing solidarity" (141). Feminism is scattered and fragmented and neither speaks a common tongue nor lends a common ear. An attempt to set up a Women's Party by an ex-feminist writer, Manuela Gretkowska, though accepted with a degree of enthusiasm by the NGO women's organizations, seems to be doomed to failure because Gretkowska publicly disclaimed any allegiance to the struggle for women's reproductive rights and the rights of sexual minorities.

In what follows, I will therefore ponder over the question why, having struggled with men "arm in arm" to subvert an oppressive system, women relinquished activism after transition to democracy was made.

Given that the 1980s (the establishment of Solidarity, the martial law, the underground work, and, finally, the systemic transformation at the end of the decade) constituted the time of a political and social upheaval, it appears that Polish women lost a possibility of organizing on a large scale, articulating our views and group interests and inserting them into the public arena. Put crudely by one Solidarity activist, Anna Bikont, “we respected that order [patriarchy]; we were not subverters. In this sense, Solidarity did not subvert the expected customs” (Kondratowicz 2001, 188). This statement underlies two facts. Solidarity women fought for the cause that was by definition ungendered, i.e. it concerned all opposition activists. In this respect women, as much as men, were the subverters. By invoking women’s reluctance to “subvert the expected customs,” Bikont fully lays out the ideology of patriarchy.

Over the last decade or so, the gendered aspect of Polish resistance movement has been the subject of scrutiny in Polish as well as western scholarship. Shana Penn’s article “The National Secret” (1994) and, subsequently, her book, *Women’s Underground* (2003), as well as Ewa Kondratowicz’s book *Lipstick on a Flag* (2001), are especially valuable since all three draw on the empirical material furnished by interviews with Solidarity women activists. When in the early nineties Penn conducted her interviews, she discovered facts which very few Poles knew at that time and which, even to date, many neither acknowledge nor appreciate.

When, on December 13, 1981, the communist regime imposed martial law in Poland and thousands of people, including most of the male leaders, were imprisoned, women created a clandestine network that endured, despite repression, for over seven years, keeping Solidarity alive. This role, which cannot be overestimated, has never been officially recognized following the changeover in 1989, and our achievement has been erased from collective memory. What Penn further discovered was that the women activists she had talked to, with only one exception, fully accepted this status quo. “In their own eyes,” she says, “their underground accomplishment had not been revolutionary but necessary. Had they demanded recognition, they would have made a revolutionary statement. They did not see the necessity of this” (1994, 66). Having struggled underground for independent Poland, most of us relinquished activism after transition to democracy was made, or channeled it elsewhere, away from politics.

If this analysis rings a bell, it should, for I am clearly not the first to discuss the nuances of gendered colonialism. In *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, Cynthia Enloe argues that the significance of patriarchal oppres-

sion gets “diluted” when women as well as men participate in resistance to oppression and effectively overcome it. Enloe says:

... nationalist movements have rarely taken women’s experiences as the starting point for an understanding of how a people becomes colonized or how it throws off the shackles of that material and psychological domination. Rather, nationalism typically has sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope. Anger at being “emasculated” ... has been presumed to be the natural fuel for igniting a nationalist movement (1989, 44).

Post-colonial theory has not been, at least not in any uniform fashion, a part of undergraduate or graduate curricula in Polish universities. It has been all the more interesting to see how such theories, used in reference to locations different from East European post-colonial ones, have informed, in the last ten years or so, numerous MA theses and PhD dissertations in Poland. Moreover, with a few precedents signalling interest in applying post-colonial discourse to the analysis of gender in Polish culture (Przylipiak, 2002, Oleksy 2005), a steady critical shift from post-communist studies to post-colonial investigations is clearly on its way in Poland.

If anyone doubts Poland’s colonial past, they should take a walk at the centre of Warsaw. There, in the vicinity of the central train station, interwoven into a maze of modern sky scrapers stands a tribute to the Soviet empire, “a gift from the Soviet nation to the Polish nation,” the Palace of Culture and Science initially attributed with the name of Joseph Stalin. Drawing on the critique of Edward W. Said’s *Orientalism* (1978), in which he confined his analysis of colonialism and post-colonialism to the “first” and “third” world, Western slavists and, recently, also Polish commentators draw attention to the fact that the “second” world (i.e. the Soviet Union/Russia) and its satellite countries constitute a lacuna in Said’s otherwise valuable study. As Clare Cavanagh says, Czesław Miłosz’s “outrage” while reading sixteenth-century accounts of the atrocities committed in America by Spanish Conquistadors “came from his own experience as a colonized subject in a part of the world” (2004, 83) which had never before been recognized as colonized. Maria Janion also draws on “western” sources in her discussion of Poland’s colonial past. Referring to Fred Halliday’s claim that both Ireland and Eastern Europe experienced colonialism in the past, she lists, after Halliday, the “symptoms,” as she says, indicative of this understanding, two of which are of importance to the present analysis: the recourse to nationalism

and a susceptible relationship between national and religious identity with the major tenets of civil society, such as equal rights for all.

Before the 2004 EU enlargement, Poland was in a similar situation as other post-communist countries. In Poland, just as elsewhere, transition from the old to the new system transpired through the collision of the old system with new democratic elements which randomly modified the old system. Yet Polish conservatism in the ethical sphere, even as it clashed with the influences from Euro-American mass culture, has been most conspicuous (see Oleksy, 2004). Just as the governments of Socialist People's Poland made capital of the moral totalitarianism of the Catholic Church for their own purposes, so the consecutive governments of the Third Republic of Poland (on the spectrum from left to right) have reached their political goals by taking advantage of rightist concepts and ideas.

Despite its impressive growth rates and steadily decreasing unemployment (probably owing to rising migration of Poles to the West), Poland is presently undergoing the worst crisis since the "great change" in 1989. In 2005, a homophobic and nationalist party Law and Justice won the elections in Poland, depositing identical twins on the seats of Prime Minister (Jarosław Kaczyński) and President (Lech Kaczyński). In 2006, Law and Justice entered a coalition with the League of Polish Families, a radical Catholic-nationalist party and populist Self-Defence. The coalition and each party separately is known for its homophobic and undemocratic views. Jarosław Kaczyński, in particular, went on record saying that citizenship is a meaningless concept and one that is not present in the Polish tradition (Paradowska 2006, 1) and in his parliamentary exposé he said this:

We will do all we can to defend the family from the attack from without. I remind you of the House's declaration to defend the sovereignty of Poland in the field of culture and morality. I remind you of the shape of the Constitution, of the words saying that marriage is a relation of a man and a woman.

([www.informacje.int.pl/expose\\_premiera\\_rp\\_jaroslawa\\_kaczynskiego](http://www.informacje.int.pl/expose_premiera_rp_jaroslawa_kaczynskiego) - 91k. *My translation*)

Throughout less than half of its term, the coalition has entered into conflict with several groups of professionals: judges, university professors, journalists, doctors and nurses, etc. Several months ago the parliament passed the de-communization law, fortunately ruled out by the Constitutional Tribunal, which could have deprived several groups of professionals (including university professors and journalists) the right to practice their profession. Citizenship is – as we have seen – a meaningless concept

to the Prime Minister whereas the reproductive rights of women and the rights of sexual minorities are foreign to the Polish tradition.

Protests have been coming from all quarters and include individual acts of civil disobedience. Several months ago, a member of the European Parliament, Bronisław Geremek, professor of history and a legendary Solidarity activist (also former minister of foreign affairs), refused to sign what is in Poland commonly referred to as a “loyalty declaration” similar to the ones Polish Solidarity activists were forced to sign at the beginning of the Marshall Law in the winter of 1981-82. Geremek, supported in his rebellion by the majority of the EU Parliament, was threatened of losing his mandate despite the fact that he received it through the general ballot.

In an interview for *Corriere della Sera*, Geremek said: “If I am deprived of my European seat, I will go home to fight for Poland”. Though it may seem exaggerated (after all Poland is a member state of the EU and what transpired in 1944, 1956, 1968 and 1981 will not happen again), the time has come to mobilize the resources and close the ranks. The question then – now as in past – is how women, who are very much part of this general protest, will come out of the confrontation. United, ready to struggle for equality on the market, in politics and in the home; for reproductive rights and against homophobia? Will there be basic empathy and inclusiveness that will give us the strength to resist – for once – the oft-heard “not now, later” or will we come out divided and not listening to one another. I hope for the former for I fully agree with Zack when she says what I will now, concluding, quote at length:

The commonality of relation to a historical group can serve as a moral basis to end oppression by making liberatory efforts compelling to all women in their sameness, and such a moral basis can motivate political action and social change. (2005, 9).

## References

- Cavanagh, Clare (2004): "Postcolonial Poland". *Common Knowledge* 10 (1), pp 82-92.
- Halliday, Fred (1995): *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and Politics in the Middle East*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Enloe, Cynthia (1989): *Bananas, Beaches & Bases*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Fraser, Nancy (1977): *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflexions on the "Postsocialist" Conditions*. New York, London: Routledge.
- Geremek, Stanisław (2007): Interview in *Corriere della Sera*, 26.04  
Available at: [www.eurotopics.org/en/presseschau/autorenindex/autor\\_geremek\\_bronislaw/](http://www.eurotopics.org/en/presseschau/autorenindex/autor_geremek_bronislaw/) - 38k).
- Hurston, Zora Neale (1978): *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Janion, Maria (2006): *Niesamowita słowa szczyzna. Fantazmaty literatury*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie.
- Kaczyński, Jarosław (2006): "Parliamentary Exposé".  
Available at: [www.informacje.int.pl/expose\\_premiera\\_rp\\_jaroslawakaczynskiego](http://www.informacje.int.pl/expose_premiera_rp_jaroslawakaczynskiego) - 91k
- Murdoch, Iris (1977): *The Nice and the Good*. Frogmore, St Albans: Triad/Panther Books
- Oleksy, El bieta H. (2004): "Women's Pictures and the Politics of Resistance in Poland". In: *Gender and Power 2, Nordic Journal of Women's Studies (NORA)* 3(12), pp. 162-171.
- (2005): "Women, don't interfere with us; we're fighting for Poland: Polish Mothers and Transgressive Others". In: *Women, Activism and Social Change*. Ed. Maja Mikula. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 179-197.
- (2006): "The Politics of Representing Gender in Contemporary Polish Cinema and Visual Art" In: *East European Cinemas*. Ed. Aniko Imre. London, New York: Routledge. pp. 49-62.
- Przyłipiak, Mirosław (2002): "Kompleks Piszczyka: polski m czyzna na ekranie". In: *Kino* 12, 7.

- Paradowska, Janina (2006): "Wizje Prezesa. Co Jarosław Kaczyński powiedział w Salonie Polityki ju po wyłączeniu kamer". In: *Polityka* 12 (1547), 22.
- Radway, Janice (1999): "What's in a Name? Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, 20 November 1998". In: *American Quarterly* 51 (1).
- Said, Edward W. (1978): *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage.
- Spelman, Elizabeth (1988): *Inessential Woman. Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought*.
- Zack, Naomi (2005): *Inclusive Feminism. A Third Wave of Women's Commonality*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.



## Chapter 8

# Theorizing Gender, Sexuality and Politics in an Era of Global Change<sup>1</sup>

*Kathleen B. Jones*

In 1988, in the preface to *The Political Interests of Gender* we wrote that our work had been prompted by ‘the desire to promote dialogue about the parameters of a truly international feminist theory and practice that represents the interests of gender in cross-cultural and historical perspective’. Much has transpired in the years since that book’s publication, making dialogue about international feminist theory and practice both more difficult and more imperative. The terms ‘feminist theory and practice’ have undergone further fragmentation and contestation. And the idea of the international itself has been subjected to rigorous criticism (Rosenau 1990, Mackie 2001, Naples and Desai 2002). At the same time, ‘globalisation’ has put questions about the interests of gender into circulation around the world.

The transformation signaled by globalisation includes major changes in the social relations and spaces of production, a widened gap between the technological and economic resources of the relatively more industrialized ‘North’ and the relatively more impoverished ‘South’, environmental and ecological crises, increased population mobility, porous national borders and the undermining of national sovereignty, and the emergence of new supranational structures and ideological movements. Feminist scholars have stressed the relevance of gender to understanding

---

1 This essay is a much abbreviated version of “Out of Epistemology,” co-authored by Anna G. Jónasdóttir and myself, which will appear in Jónasdóttir and Jones, *The Political Interests of Gender Revisited*, (Manchester University Press, forthcoming).

the impact of globalisation on social and political relations in different political systems (Walby 2003).<sup>2</sup>

At the risk of oversimplification, we note that in the last two decades since the publication of our last anthology two trends have characterised approaches to the concept of gender in political studies. On the one hand, feminist scholars in many fields including international studies, development studies, political economy, comparative political studies and social policy have made the political interests of gender central to their research and stressed the importance of gender to the study of topics such as the impact of new media and new technologies on gender relations; rights and citizenship; the restructuring of gendered roles, identities and relationships in different social contexts; political representation and governance; individual, family and household welfare; sexual trafficking; and the gendered dynamics of militarisation (Marchand and Runyan 2000; Kelly et al. 2002; Walby 1997, 1999; Vishvanathan 1997; Enloe 2004, 2000; Freeman 2000; Shade 2002; Green and Adam 2001; Sassen 1998; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; Rai 2003; Banaszak, Beckwith and Rucht 2003; Lister 2003; Daly and Rake 2003; Sainsbury 1999). On the other hand, many of the most frequently cited texts of feminist theory, particularly those influenced by post-structuralism, have ‘deconstructed’ both the concept of ‘gender’ and the concept of ‘interests’ and urged researchers to discard them as ‘essentialist’.

Instead of choosing between these two trends, we call for a reconceptualisation of politics that links structural analysis of social relationships, activities, and institutions to critical attention to narrative or discursive practices. Reconnecting linguistic accounts of discursive power to systemic accounts of institutional power can produce richly detailed political analyses of the material conditions that both sustain and challenge a given gender system. Such accounts should include analysis of the spatial (institutional structures and places), temporal (historical), as well as the discursive (ideological, linguistic) conditions under which individuals and groups (interests) act in ways that both reproduce and subvert a social order (actions). For the purposes of theory-building, such an analysis holds discourse and social structure analytically distinct and situates them in place and time. We call this approach *Critical Feminist-Realist Theory of Politics*.

It is important to stress here that our intention is not to reject discursive approaches to studying gender and politics, but to demonstrate their partiality. Our outline of a *Critical Feminist-Realist Theory of Politics* is an attempt to push past unproductive polarities and ‘negotiate a path

---

2 For an overview of various contributions to the globalisation debate and an assessment of different theoretical approaches to globalisation, see for instance Ian Bruff (2005).

between always impure positions—seeing that politics is always/already bound up with what it contests (including theories)—and that theories are always implicated in various political struggles (whether this is acknowledged or not)’ (Grosz 1989: 99).

One of the strengths of post-structuralism has been to call into question the capacity of modern epistemic frameworks or knowledge systems to ‘provide an adequate representation of things’ (Benhabib 1990: 110). The resultant emphasis on the power of language or discourse as systems of meaning to produce and legitimate ways of being in the world, and even our understanding of ‘world’ itself, has contributed importantly to research on subjectivity. Yet, besides disclaiming the capacity of language to ‘represent’ the world, or ever fully describe what it names, post-structuralism extended its criticism to reject any ground or analytical ‘foundation’ other than the ever-shifting ground of power itself on which to rest knowledge claims, political judgments, or political theories.

Post-structuralists judged all ‘grand theories’ or meta-narratives negatively, including humanism, Marxism and any version of feminism that traced its roots to these traditions, for having written stories that followed a linear, univocal, progressive line, organising history into a systematic and coherent narrative and overlooking ruptures, breaks and exceptional cases which would have troubled its theory. As a result, efforts to identify ‘oppressive’ gender regimes and articulate criteria with which to evaluate gender systems in relation to feminist politics were stultified.

The more post-structuralists treated ‘all aspects of culture and human action as texts’, the more invisible social relations and institutions of power became in their accounts (Calhoun 1993: 80). The result has been to eclipse social analysis of structures and institutions in political theory, including not only analyses of the market and the state, but also of kinship and family, social relations of intimacy, and other social networks of interaction, in favor of discursive analysis of texts, where ‘texts’ implies an inherent openness in ‘structures.’ This eclipse has had significant consequences for feminist political theory. By the time the charge of essentialism was transported to feminist theory, the imperative to treat as inherently suspicious all efforts to theorise gender as a specific system of social relations and material conditions, including embodiment, seemed unimpeachable.

Laclau and Mouffe, for instance, define ‘plurality’ as a logically given point of departure for their analysis and a necessary pre-condition on the road to socialism, which they redefine as the hegemony of ‘democratic practice’. In their view, no element for representing the social/political

plurality of ‘articulatory practices’ (such as class, race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality etc.) of subjectivity should be seen as more theoretically significant than any other. Yet, emptied of specificity, it becomes difficult to understand to what any of these elements refer in particular and equally difficult to identify the specific systems of power that constitute them.

This lack of specificity is the result of confusion between levels of analysis. When post-structuralists postulate that discourse produces subjectivity, they state an ontological premise that they also treat as an epistemological premise: Discourse produces subjectivity; we know subjectivity by apprehending its meaning in discourse. Yet, the premise ‘discourse produces subjectivity’ cannot directly provide an explanation at the level of basic or middle range social theory about how any specific discourse produces any particular set of meanings.

For example, to postulate that heterosexist discourses of sex/desire<sup>3</sup> produce heterosexuality as normative (hetero-normativity) through representations that vilify and reject (make abject) homoerotic sex/desire provides neither an epistemology of sexuality nor a specific account of the production of sexuality as such. In other words, this theory stipulates discourse produces sex/desire but does not explain what constitutes sex/desire as a conceptually distinguishable element of social being. To account for sex/desire as such, we need both a set of ontological and epistemological assumptions and a specific theory with which to distinguish sex/desire from other aspects of social being. We also need a specific theory to explain what particular activities and historical conditions generate its production and transformation. As Jónasdóttir (1994: 33-4) stated, ‘if the purpose of theory is to describe and explain sex/gender-specific oppression...as the oppression women suffer as women’ then ‘women and men must be conceptualised as sex/gender groups (and not as groups determined by class, race, or something else)’. Ontological premises about desire can provide neither an account of sex/desire per se nor an explanation of its historical production and transformation.

Put differently, the more completely post-structuralist theories about the constitutive power of discourse were lodged in social and political analysis, the more ill-defined, unspecific and de-institutionalised concepts of power and politics became.

What kind of theory of politics then do feminist post-structuralists develop? What impact has this theory had on the use of central concepts such as ‘politics’, ‘interests’, and ‘gender’ in feminist theory and research?

---

3 We use the term sex/desire to signal a particular aspect of political sexuality.

Despite critical differences, ‘strong’ post-structuralists share common premises which structure their approach to politics and political theory: (1) the claim that feminist theory has based its ideas of democracy on an ontological concept of gender as a common identity, which narrows its vision of democracy to a ‘representational politics’ of ‘interests’ articulated by transparent, autonomous ‘subjects’; (2) the claim that, because it is impossible to define ‘identity categories’ such as gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, etc. in non-essentialist or non-ontological terms, it is impossible to theorise political ‘interests’ in advance of action; (3) the claim that politics should be understood as an articulation process, that is, as a ‘performative’ or discursive practice without any pre-defined or delimitable institutional location or pre-conditions; and (4) the claim that post-structuralism provides the correct way to articulate a new politics of radical democracy as the proliferation of ‘subject positions’.

Although post-structuralist feminist theorists connect their work to a radical democratic project, how shall we characterise their theories of the political conditions, institutions, or processes of democracy? In other words, at what level of analysis does their conceptualisation of ‘the political’ and ‘politics’ reside? A review of the use of the word ‘political’ or ‘politics’ in the work of Butler, Scott, and Mouffe demonstrates that their conceptualisation is largely ontological or metaphysical. In other words, their articulation of a theory of politics as a productive process remains on the meta-theoretical level.<sup>4</sup> In different ways, all three theorists define politics as a ‘performative’ process or an effect of language rather than as a political ‘representational’ practice in the traditional sense. In other words, they locate politics immanently in discursive processes of signification and resignification rather than as the institutionally contextualised actions of self-conscious subjects.

In different ways each of these theorists argues for a ‘new politics’, not grounded in identity (practical interests) or limited to juridical forms of representation (formal/legal interests) and against seeing political representation as a ‘set of practices derived from the alleged interests that belong to a set of ready-made subjects’ (Butler 1990: 149). In this view, politics becomes a critical epistemological practice derived from an ontological premise (discourse produces effects) that opens up possibilities

---

4 Mouffe distinguishes between ‘the political’ as the ontological ‘dimension of antagonism... constitutive of human societies’ and ‘politics’ as ‘the set of practices and institutions through which an order is created’. Nevertheless in her conceptualization, politics is largely understood as an epiphenomenon of ontology. Perhaps nowhere is the trivialisation of the complexity of ‘politics’ more evident than in the way Mouffe discusses the obstacles to creating a democratic, multipolar world order: ‘I do not want to minimize the obstacles that need to be overcome, but, at least in the case of the creation of a multipolar order, those obstacles are *only of an empirical nature*, while the cosmopolitan project is also based on flawed theoretical premises’ (Mouffe 2005: 9, 118, emphasis added).

through a radical, immanent critique of identity categories and conventional modes of representational politics. Shifting from an analysis of politics as a set of practices and activities resulting from the representation of interests articulated by subjects to an understanding of politics as a critical epistemological project constitutes a major transformation of the concept of political representation. Altogether left out of this picture is a theory of politics at the specific level.

Here we must reiterate that we do not object to broadening the concept of representation to include the representational effects of language. Rather, we are concerned that this shift away from representation in the legal/institutional sense of a formal, egalitarian presence of subjects in public life to discursive representation constitutes a rejection of the political utility of any conventional understanding of representation.

Scott (1988: 58) undertakes what she terms a reversal in ‘the direction of our causal thinking’ not simply ‘from the economic to the political sphere’ but towards ‘political rhetoric’, which she identifies as the locus of ‘meaning’ or ‘the patterns and relationships that constitute understanding or a “cultural” system’. She endorses this reversal as a ‘more radical’ conceptualisation of politics. In place of politics defined as ‘the goals of a collective movement aimed at formal participation in government or the state’ Scott advocates a concept of politics as ‘any contest for power within which identities...are created’. Scott claims that this conceptualisation of politics as a power contest about identities, which ‘suggests that there is always a politics...in the operation of discourse’, frees politics from being understood in ‘essentially descriptive’ terms (57).<sup>5</sup> Yet, the unfortunate and unintended effect of the conceptualisation of politics as any contestation of identity also frees a theory of democratic politics from any way to define and explain democracy’s enabling conditions or institutional parameters.

Similarly, Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 58, 96-7 ff) paved the way for this kind of ‘reversal’ when they build their determination of the nature of the social as ‘contingent relations’ on a ‘profound *potential* meaning’ of one of Althusser’s statements, arguing that ‘everything in the social is overdetermined...that the social constitutes itself as a symbolic order’.

Instead of identity politics, rooted in the subject of women, Butler (1990: 1, 5) argues for a ‘radical rethinking of the ontological constructions of identity’ that might ‘revive feminism on other grounds’ as the *a priori* basis for a new feminist politics.

---

5 It is worth noting in passing that for all the efforts to move politics onto some territory other than identity, the prevalence of metaphors for politics as the proliferation of identities, subject positions, or subjectivities suggests that not much of a shift may have occurred. Cf. Butler (2004).

Yet, on what is Butler's (1990) claim that feminist theory has mis-identified its subject based? The argument she offers in *Gender Trouble* conflates feminists' efforts to formulate concepts of gender and complex theories of gender systems with 'development of a language that fully or adequately represented women' (1). It infers that theorists assumed developing such a language was necessary, in an antecedent way, to foster a feminist project of political visibility, and implies that feminist theorists (who are not named) understood language in purely referential terms, that is, as if the categories of analysis they articulated were ontological instead of heuristic. In other words, Butler's argument depends on the premise that any theoretical articulation of a concept of gender at the level of specific theory is the same as constructing gender as an ontology.

Table 1. Levels of Analysis

<b>Philosophy of Science</b>	<b>Research Traditions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ontological assumptions</b></li> <li>• <b>Methodological principles</b></li> <li>• <b>Epistemological criteria</b></li> </ul>
<b>Empirical Sciences</b>	<b>Specific Theories</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Basic</b></li> <li>• <b>Middle Range</b></li> </ul>
	<b>Empirical Studies</b>

If the possibility for a dominant order to be transformed into something new is immanent in the process of signification itself and yet, to become materialised as 'the new', that possibility depends upon social contingencies that exceed the subject, we still need to explain and confront several thorny political problems.

First, how do we delineate the social contingencies and institutional structures that work to sustain particular 'regimes of power' despite the imaginative possibilities we can envision to overthrow them? Put differently, can we provide a *particular* account of the forces, interests, motivations, and purposes behind the specific 'regimes of power' that establish 'masculine hegemony and heterosexist power'? Second, if these regimes of power are multiple, how do we distinguish between them and articulate their points of convergence and dissonance? Third, what norms are available to distinguish between those repetitions leading

toward a more ‘capacious, generous and “unthreatened”’ (Butler 1995: 140) or democratic way of living and those that threaten democracy (White 2000: 93, 201)? Within the terms of post-structuralist critique, we lack a way to identify or explain institutional structures of sexism, heterosexism, racism, able-bodiedism, etc., and their inter-relationships.

This inability to theorise at the specific level about inter-relationships among structures of domination, oppression or marginalisation is the result, in part of the lack of specific level theories of gender/sexuality, race/ethnicity, and embodiment. Instead, in certain versions of the metaphysics of post-structuralism, evidence drawn from empirical observation—about how ‘identity’ is produced and lived complexly and not uni-dimensionally—is used to support ontological arguments for intersectionality at the conceptual level in specific theory.

Yet, the statement ‘gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, social and regional modalities of...identities’(Butler 1990: 3).<sup>6</sup> uses the ontological impossibility of separating dimensions of identity in concrete existence as evidence to support the epistemological claim that, at the specific-theoretical level, no conceptual distinction among such identity categories is possible. Yet, if there is no way to distinguish gender analytically from any other category then the statement ‘gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, social’ itself becomes absurd, since intersection logically implies the coming together of ‘parts’ that are conceptually distinct from one another in some identifiable way (McCall 2005).

To assert the impossibility ‘to separate out “gender”’ leads then to abandonment of social theory at the specific level of generalisation, which could provide an account of gender as a system of social relations. In place of a specific theory of gender (or of race/ethnicity, embodiment, etc.) we have a conceptualization of gender as a relation of signs in an endless and endlessly mobile chain of equivalences (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 127 ff) or significations. Definitions of political agency as performativity and political representation as reiteration remain inadequate as an ‘account of the *actual practice* of freedom by subjects or groups of subjects in the political arena’ (Webster 2000: 18).

Equally troubling, the absence of any articulated normative criteria for evaluating institutions and practices means that the understanding of democracy implicit in these theories remains highly abstract and formalistic. As we have seen, particularly in certain strong versions of post-structuralist feminist theory, the linguistic turn has represented a turning

---

6 Butler’s refusal to ‘separate out’ gender is similar to Laclau and Mouffe’s refusal to ascribe to ‘class’ any particular theoretical significance (on the premise that such a separation would imply a view of ‘society’ as ‘closed’). The unwillingness to assign gender or class explanatory power precludes the development of any specific account of gender- or class-related power in society.

away from efforts to explain how language or discourse is moored *in specific institutional contexts*. Yet, the forces and social relations of politics in the context of globalisation require us to identify and focus on specific institutions of power and their discourses, and to explore concretely how individuals and groups not only rename themselves, but also articulate practical programs of social transformation aimed at feminist democratic goals.

We continue to need political studies that identify which strategies work to advance democratic goals in what contexts for which groups. To conduct such research, we argue that theorists must continue to treat social structures and relations of power as at least *analytically* external to 'subjects' who are of course shaped by them. The point is not to be mystified by one's concepts. In other words, theory must sustain a tension between concepts as useful analytic devices, or heuristics, and the social relations they cast in relief.

By way of summary, the key points we have made about the limitations or partiality of post-structuralist accounts of feminist politics are:

1) **The rejection of any substantive account of gender** or definition of gender as social relationships (or dimensions of society) as necessarily reductionistic or essentialist. Instead, post-structuralists define gender as an indeterminate and dynamic matrix of signification without specifiable content or identifiable structure.

2) **The lack of an institutional, systemic account of politics** in favor of an ontology of the political and politics. And ontology of 'the political' conceptualizes 'the political' as the ever-present possibility of antagonism among humans (Mouffe), politics as any contest for power over identity creation (Scott), and political change as an automatic by-product of the built-in capacity for linguistic resignification or iterability of 'speech acts' (Butler). Without an institutional account of politics and the political we cannot explain the specific, historical conditions and contingencies (institutions, structures, interests, identities) that enable and constrain political agency and both promote and limit the impact of political action.

3) The displacement of a robust, multi-dimensional theory of political action and agency by a politics of performativity or articulatory practices immanent in language/discourse. Without a robust, multi-dimensional theory of action, the deliberate and deliberative efforts of individuals and groups to articulate interests in opposition to or in concert with others within the arenas of both state and civil society remain under-theorised.

4) **The lack of any discernable evaluative criteria, articulated norms or theory of judgment** precludes any way to distinguish among a set of practices as more or less democratic. The absence of evaluative criteria reduces the political vision of democracy to a philosophical abstraction and brackets substantive efforts to achieve political representation, equality, freedom, and justice in civil society and state contexts in favor of non-judicial forms of oppositional politics.

In response to these four limitations, we urge the reconstruction of feminist political theory based on the following basic elements:

1) **A historical and materialist theory of gender** as a specific social system of relations and activities, produced in and through identifiable, historically changing social relations and practices, institutions and norms in specific cultural settings. This theory of gender connects ontological assumptions about gender to specific level theories of its production and includes, but is not limited to, discursive representations of masculinities and femininities and theories of sexual difference.

2) **An institutionally grounded theory of politics**, which locates politics spatially and temporally. **Politics is the systemically shaped set of actions self-consciously engaged by agents in an historically and institutionally conditioned context and oriented toward conflicts and resolutions regarding the scope, nature, and consequences of public life, including contestations about the boundaries between ‘public’ and ‘private’.** In democratic systems, with which we are concerned, politics is people’s struggle for freedom or for formal and substantive inclusion or presence in public life. With regard to decision-making in a polity, ‘democracy enables participation and voice for all those affected by problems and their proposed solutions’ (Young 2000: 10). Yet, participation and voice as normative democratic ideals are tied to the question of plurality not only in procedural, but also in substantive terms. In other words, ‘one of the purposes of advocating inclusion is to allow the transformation of the style and terms of debate and thereby leave open the possibility for significant change in outcomes’ (Young 2000: 12).

3) **A multi-dimensional theory of political action and agency** as the deliberate and deliberative efforts of individuals and groups to gain presence (formal interest) and articulate claims (substantive interests) in the institutionally structured and historically changing arenas of both state and civil society. Any conceptualisation of political action must include, but not be limited to, activities in the arena of formal politics, or historically-located ‘state’-centered processes. It must also include activities in ‘civil society’ as a site of politics. Actions may be interpreted differently

and have consequences in excess of actors' intentions. Yet, neither the unpredictability or uncertainty of action, nor the fact that 'agency' is realised (made real) through action undercuts the importance and motivating force of political consciousness. Consciousness of possibility—the perceived ability to begin something new (Arendt)—remains critical to the process of political mobilisation and change.

4) **A theory of the normative/evaluative criteria for differentiating between democratic and non-democratic practices of representation.** This theory should include the double-normative of democratic freedom: inclusion in deliberation and outcome. 'Strong and normatively legitimate democracy...includes equally in the process that leads to decisions all those who will be affected by them' (Young 2000: 11). as a specific social system of relations and activities, produced in and through identifiable, historically changing social relations and practices, institutions and norms in specific cultural settings. The articulation of 'normatively legitimate democracy' requires, but is not limited to, the articulation of a theory of justice that addresses juridical and non-juridical elements of equality.

We argue feminist political theory needs to take another 'turn', one that moves through, but *not without*, strategies of post-structuralist analysis. Rather than collapse institutions into discourse or reduce discourse to a by-product or effect of institutions, feminist theory should distinguish between, yet connect, discursive accounts of gender to systemic accounts of gender systems as an effect of institutional and structural power.

How then can we do this? What theoretical frameworks are available with which to approach this task?

Here we offer some points for the further development of a feminist critical theory of politics in concrete and 'realist' terms. We expect a feminist theory of politics to link historical, systemic analysis of institutions with critical analysis of discursive processes.

Even though we remain critical of how post-structuralist theory largely conceptualises production as a discursive process of subject-formation, we contend that analysis of social processes of gender production remains central to the articulation of a theory of gender differentiation and inequality. In this regard, Butler's critique of Fraser's distinction between economic and cultural readings of gender and sexuality is instructive, though underdeveloped. 'It would be a mistake', Butler writes, 'to understand [the production of dominant and abject sexuality] as "merely cultural" if they are essential to the functioning of the sexual order of political economy...The economic, tied to the reproductive, is neces-

sarily linked to the reproduction of heterosexuality...This is not simply a question of certain people suffering a lack of cultural recognition... but...a specific mode of sexual production and exchange that works to maintain the stability of gender, the heterosexuality of desire, and the naturalization of the family' (Butler 1998: 42).

Notably, Butler alludes to a 'specific mode of sexual production', but does not develop this insight. In our analysis, the production of sexuality, or what we call socio-sexuality, is neither a feature of political economy (though sexuality has economic significance) nor a cultural effect (though sexuality has symbolic significance). Rather, the production of sexuality is an activity distinguishable from both 'labour' in the narrow economic sense and reproduction.

The key question is: *How is gender produced and under what conditions does it become a specific system of structural inequality?* What meta-theoretical assumptions about the production of social systems of power can we use to articulate a theory of gender inequality? How can these premises be used to develop basic and middle level theories of gender differentiation and structural inequality?

We reconfigure historical-materialist/realist premises that stress the centrality of productive activity in the creation of the means of life and of people themselves. Yet, instead of the traditional reading of 'productive activity' to connote only 'labour' or 'work' in narrowly economic terms, or expanded to include cultural activities—such as the activities of speech and art—we claim a conceptualisation of productive activity that includes a 'specific kind of productive, or creative, process; a continuous and interactive process which goes on between' people as socio-sexual beings (Jónasdóttir 1994: 219). This latter kind of activity is the process by which gender as such is produced in particular forms of 'political sexuality'.

In this theory, 'sexuality' can be understood both in its everyday meaning and 'as a structural concept' roughly 'analogous to the concept of "economy"'. In their broader meanings economy refers to the social process of the production of the means of life while sexuality refers to the social process of the production of life itself, or the process in which people create people'. As a structural relationship sexuality is an organised process of human interaction 'in which people enjoy and create people (others and themselves), in which they give and take/receive, use and produce socio-sexual goods', desires, needs, and pleasures (Jónasdóttir 1994: 228).

Understanding gender as produced through the social organisation of a particular kind of productive activity takes us to the level of specific theory and provides a way to distinguish gender as a dimension of society from other dimensions, such as class and race.

At a necessary minimum, such a theory identifies ‘a specific and “essential” sex/gender *relationship*, one that generates sex/gender specific *practice* or creative *activity*, a specific human development capacity or *power* over the use and control of which certain groups of people struggle’. In addition, it postulates that ‘specific *institution(s)* are more central than others’ in the reproduction of any sex/gender system in different historical contexts (Jónasdóttir 1994: 213). This does not imply that, existentially speaking, gender operates separately from other relationships, such as class, race, or nationality, to structure a social system. On the contrary, it is the task of middle level social theory to articulate and document the particular ways that gender is structured, experienced and transformed in different historical and cultural contexts (Jónasdóttir 1994: 333 ff).

But what specific activities produce gender or the sexed/gendered aspect of human existence? Through the appropriation of what kind of power? According to what norms and principles of exchange? And what institutions are most central in this productive process? At the basic level of theory, these questions are trans-historical. Yet, the specific activities, modes and norms of appropriation and institutional locations of gender production varies in different societies over time.

To answer the first question—what activities produce gender—we hypothesise that it is the appropriation of love or love power in the particular historical form institutionalised in a social order that constitutes humans as sex/gendered beings. ‘Love refers to human beings’ capacities (powers) to make—and remake—“their kind”, not only literally in the procreation and socialization of children but also in the creation and recreation of adult people as socio-sexual *individuated* and *personified* existences’ (Jónasdóttir 1994: 221). The social and institutional location and organisation of the appropriation of love power, then, produces historically specific patterns of gender differentiation. ‘Love [power] is a specific kind of alienable and causally potent human power, the social organization of which is the basis of contemporary Western patriarchy’ (Jónasdóttir 1994: 221). From the general or meta-theoretical postulate that the appropriation of love power produces people as specific sorts of sex/gendered individuals in modern society, it then becomes possible to develop specific level theoretical postulates about the historical conditions shaping the production of gender in different systems.

Just as the capitalist must appropriate labour power in order to be and remain a capitalist, so also, men today must exploit women's 'love power' if they are to 'remain the kind of men that historical circumstances force them to be' (Jónasdóttir 1994: 225). The exploitative appropriation of women's love power makes heterosexuality function oppressively, both internally, in the form of women's subordination to men, and externally, with regards to so-called 'marginalised' sexualities. The historical identification of bourgeois marriage and its gender-oppressive patterns of appropriation of love with the legitimate social organisation or mode of love produces a specific form of heterosexuality as normative. Moreover, this exploitative appropriation process is not limited to the institution of marriage. The appropriation of love power operates in the dynamics of gender reproduction sustained by social relations in other institutions of civil society and the state, whether in the form of gender discrimination in patterns of employment, recognition of other modes of socio-sexual relations, wage differentials, civil and social rights, and political representation.

We have not advocated a theory of gender that is 'merely sexual'.<sup>7</sup> Instead we have suggested a conceptualisation of gender not grounded in a theory of identity, which offers fruitful possibilities for a materialist/realist critical feminist theory of politics. Our theorisation of gender as a set of social relationships produced by specific activities in particular institutional contexts links the production of gender to the reproduction of a political system of gender power without reducing gender either to the 'merely economic' or the 'merely cultural'. By focusing on relations of production of people as sex/gendered beings, this conceptualisation enables investigation of those particular activities and institutions in specific societies, which sustain gender inequality. It also supports analysis of how such activities and institutions interact with other dimensions of human activity to reproduce a social system in all its complexity.

We can now identify the political interests of gender as those actions emerging from conflicts over the appropriation of love power as these affect the scope, nature, and consequences of public life. These actions are self-consciously engaged by those who seek to sustain or change a particular social organisation of the productive activity of love by altering the institutional structures and discursive practices conditioning the social organisation of the process of gender production. We advance the claim that actions leading to a more inclusive system of representation not only in the deliberative domain of democratic decision-making, but also in the administrative and judicial institutions of politics, whether at

---

7 See the debate between Fraser and Butler on the concept, 'merely cultural' (Butler 1998: 33-44; Fraser, 1998: 140-150).

the local, national or regional level, must remain as central to feminist theories of democracy as expanded modes of communication and resignification.

Rather than declare the concepts ‘women’ and ‘gender’ essentialist fictions, perhaps the greatest feminist challenge today is to ‘build or strengthen different forms of organised cooperation among women’, which can ‘articulate and deal with conflicts among women’. At the same time we need forms of organised cooperation between women and men to act collectively against patriarchy. ‘Perhaps we can speak of a *differentiated solidarity* among women, a solidarity built on awareness of both common and different interests, a solidarity that also comprises the prerequisites for a cooperation with men, on women’s terms’ (Jónasdóttir 1995: 18, emphasis in the original).

## References

- Assiter, Alison (1996): *Enlightened Women. Modernist Feminism in a Postmodern Age*. New York: Routledge.
- Banaszak, Lee Ann, Karen Beckwith and Dieter Rucht (eds) (2003): *Women's Movements Facing the Reconfigured State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Braidotti, Rosi (1994): *Nomadic Subjects*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Bruff, Ian 2005. 'Making Sense of the Globalisation Debate when Engaging in Political Economy Analysis', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 7 (2): 261-80.
- Butler, Judith (1990): *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Butler, Judith (1993): *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*. London: Routledge.
- Butler, Judith (1995): 'For a Careful Reading'. In: *Feminist Contentions. A Philosophical Exchange*. Ed. Seyla Benhabib, Judith Butler, Drucilla Cornell and Nancy Fraser., pp. 127-43. London: Routledge.
- Butler, Judith (1997): *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. New York: Routledge.
- Butler, Judith (1998): 'Merely Cultural', *New Left Review* 227: 33-45.
- Butler, Judith, Joan W. Scott (eds). (1992): *Feminists Theorize the Political*. New York: Routledge.
- Carlsson Wetterberg, Christina (1998): 'Equal or different? That's Not the Question. Women's Political Strategies in Historical Perspective'. In: *Is there a Nordic Feminism? Nordic feminist thought on culture and society*. Eds: Drude von der Fehr, Anna G. Jónasdóttir and Bente Rosenbeck. pp. 21-43. Philadelphia: UCL Press.
- Daly, Mary and Katherine Rake (2003): *Gender and the Welfare State. Care, Work, and Welfare in Europe and the USA*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

- Disch, Lisa. (1999): 'Judith Butler and the Politics of the Performative'. In: *Political Theory* 27 (4): 545-60.
- Ehrenreich, Barbara and Arlie Russel Hochschild (eds) (2003): *Global Woman. Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*. New York: Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt and Company.
- Enloe, Cynthia (2000): *Maneuvers. The International Politics of Women's Lives*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Enloe, Cynthia. (2004): *The Curious Feminist. Searching for Women in a New Age of Empire*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Fraser, Nancy (1995): 'Pragmatism, Feminism, and the Linguistic Turn'. In: *Feminist Contentions. A Philosophical Exchange*. Eds. Seyla Benhabib, Judith Butler, Drucilla Cornell and Nancy Fraser. pp. 157-71. London: Routledge.
- Fraser, Nancy (2003): 'Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition, and Participation'. In: *Redistribution or Recognition: A Political-Philosophical Exchange*. Eds. Nancy Fraser and Alex Honneth. pp. 7-109. London: Verso.
- Freeman, Carla. (2000): *High Tech and High Heels in the Global Economy*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Gatens, Moira. (1995): *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power and Corporeality*. New York: Routledge.
- Green, Eileen, Alison Adam (eds). (2001): *Virtual Gender: Technology, Consumption, and Identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Grosz, Elizabeth (1994): *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism. Theories of Representation and Difference*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Grosz, Elizabeth (1989): 'Sexual Difference and the Problem of Essentialism'. In: *Inscriptions*. pp. 86-101.
- Hird, Myra J. (2004): 'Feminist Matters. New Materialist Considerations of Sexual Difference'. In: *Feminist Theory* 5 (2). pp. 223-32.
- Honneth, Axel (2003): 'Redistribution as Recognition: A Response to Nancy Fraser'. In: *Redistribution or Recognition: A Political-Philosophical Exchange*. Eds. Nancy Fraser, Alex Honneth. pp. 110-97. London: Verso.
- Jónasdóttir, Anna G. (1988): 'On the Concept of Interests, Women's Interests, and the Limitations of Interest Theory'. In: *The Political Interests of Gender. Developing Theory and Research with a Feminist Face*. Eds. Kathleen B. Jones and Anna G. Jónasdóttir. pp. 33-65. London: Sage Publications.

- Jónasdóttir, Anna G. (1994): *Why Women Are Oppressed*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Jónasdóttir, Anna G. (1995): 'What has Love to do with Power and Political Interests'. Paper presented at the conference 'Macht-Frauenmacht-MachtFrauen-GegenMacht', arranged by the 'Arbeitskreis Politik und Geschlecht in der Deutschen Vereinigung für politische Wissenschaft', Heimfolkshochschule Springe, Germany, 3-5 February.
- Jónasdóttir, Anna G., von der Fehr, Drude (1998): 'Introduction: Ambiguous times—contested spaces in the politics, organization and identities of gender'. In: *Is there a Nordic Feminism? Nordic feminist thought on culture and society*. Eds. Drude von der Fehr, Anna G. Jónasdóttir, Bente Rosenbeck. pp. 1-18. Philadelphia: UCL Press.
- Jones, Kathleen B., Anna G. Jónasdóttir (eds) (1988): *The Political Interests of Gender. Developing Theory and Research with a Feminist Face*. London: Sage Publications.
- Kelly, Rita Mae, Jane H. Bayes, Mary E. Hawkesworth, Brigitte Young (eds) (2001): *Gender, Globalization and Democratization*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Laclau, Ernesto, Chantal Mouffe (1985): *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. New York: Verso.
- Laudan, Larry (1977): *Progress and Its Problems. Towards a Theory of Scientific Growth*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lister, Ruth. (ed) (2003): *Citizenship. Feminist Perspectives* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). New York: New York University Press.
- Mackie, Vera (2001): 'The Language of Globalisation: Transnationality and Feminism'. In: *International Feminist Journal of Politics* (3)2. pp 180-206.
- Marchand, Marianne H., Anne Sisson Runyan (eds) (2000): *Gender and Global Restructuring. Sightings, Sites and Resistances*. London: Routledge.
- McCall, Leslie (2005): 'The Complexity of Intersectionality'. In: *Signs* 30(3). pp 1771-1800.
- Naples and Desai (eds) (2002): *Women's Activism and Globalization: Linking Local Struggles and Transnational Politics*. New York: Routledge.
- Rai, Shirin. (ed) (2003): *Mainstreaming Gender, Democratizing the State? Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

- Rosenau, James N. (1990): *Turbulence in World Politics. A Theory of Change and Continuity*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Sainsbury, Diane (ed) (1999): *Gender and Welfare State Regimes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sassen, Saskia (1998): *Globalization and Its Discontents. Essays on the New Mobility of People and Money*. New York: The New Press.
- Segal, Lynne (1999): *Why Feminism? Gender, Psychology, Politics*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Scott, Joan W. (1988): *Gender and the Politics of History*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Scott, Joan W. (1996): *Only Paradoxes to Offer. French Feminists and the Rights of Man*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.
- Shade, Leslie Regan (2002): *Gender and Community in the Social Construction of the Internet*. New York: P. Lang.
- Shapiro, Ian, Alexander Wendt (1992): 'The Difference that Realism Makes: Social Science and the Politics of Consent'. In: *Politics and Society* 20 (2). pp 197-224.
- Vishvanathan, Nalini (Coordinator), Lynn Duggan, Laurie Nisonoff, Nan Wieggersma (eds) (1997): *The Women, Gender and Development Reader*. London: Zed Books.
- Walby, Sylvia (1997): *Gender Transformations*. London: Routledge.
- Walby, Sylvia. (ed) (1999): *New Agendas for Women*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Walby, Sylvia (2003): *Modernities/Globalisation/Complexities*. Paper presented to conference of the British Sociological Association, University of York.
- White, Stephen K. (2000): *Sustaining Affirmation. The Strengths of Weak Ontology in Political Theory*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Young, Iris Marion (2000): *Inclusion and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Zalewski, Marysia (2000): *Feminism After Postmodernism: Theorising Through Practice*. London: Routledge.





## Notes on Contributors

**Anita Göransson** is Professor of Gender Studies with special reference to Gender, Economic Change and Organisation at the Department of Gender Studies, Linköping University. She is a member of the Board of the Centre of Gender Excellence, GEXcel. She has a background in economic and social history. Her numerous publications include *Sekelskiftet och kön. Strukturella och kulturella övergångar 1800, 1900 och 2000*. [Turns of centuries. Structural and cultural transitions in 1800, 1900 and 2000] (2000); *Makten och mångfalden: Eliter och etnicitet på 2000-talet* [Power and diversity: Elites and ethnicities in the 21st century] (2005) as well as *Maktens kön. Kvinnor och män i den svenska makteliten på 2000-talet* [The Gender of Power. Women and Men in the Swedish Power Elite in the 2000s] (2007).

**Jeff Hearn** is Professor of Gender Studies with special reference to Critical Studies of Men and Masculinities at the Department of Gender Studies, Linköping University. He is a member of the Board of the Centre of Gender Excellence, GEXcel. His background is sociology, social policy, organisation studies, geography and urban planning. He is internationally well known for his strong contributions to the formation of the field of critical studies of men and masculinities within the broader framework of Gender Studies. He has published extensively on issues related to men, masculinities, violence, organisations and sexuality, among others *The Gender of Oppression* (1982); *Men in the Public Eye* (1992); “Sex” at “Work” (1995) (with W. Parkin); *The Violences of Men* (1998); *Gender, Sexuality and Violence in Organisations* (with W. Parkin) (2001).

**Anna G. Jónasdóttir** is professor of Gender Studies and Head of the Center for Feminist Social Studies, Örebro University. She is a member of the Board of the Centre of Gender Excellence, GEXcel. Her background is in political science, sociology, economic history, psychology with social and political theory as her main field of interest. Her list of publications include the book *Kärlekskraft, makt och politiska intressen. En teori om patriarkatet i nutida västerländska samhällen* (2003), which is a Swedish translation of *Love Power and Political Interests* (1991), and the book

*Why Women Are Oppressed* (1994), also published in Spanish as *El poder del amor* (1993), and *Is there a Nordic Feminism? Nordic thought on culture and society* (with Drude von der Fehr & Bente Rosenbeck) (1998).

**Kathleen B. Jones** is professor emerita of Women's Studies, San Diego State University, USA. She is a member of the Centre of Gender Excellence, GEXcel's international Advisory Board. Her background is political science, and her research interests are women's and gender politics. She has published numerous books and articles within these fields, among others the books *The Political Interests of Gender. Developing Theory and Research with a Feminist Face* (with Anna G. Jónasdóttir) (1988), *Compassionate Authority: Democracy and the Representation of Women* (1993) and *Women Transforming Politics* (with Joan Tronto and Cathy J. Cohen) (1997) as well as the auto/biographical experimenting book on violence against women *Living Between Danger and Love. The Limits of Choice* (2000).

**Nina Lykke** is professor of Gender Studies with special reference to Gender and Culture and head of Department of Gender Studies, Linköping University. Her background is in literary and cultural studies. She is director of the Centre of Gender Excellence, GEXcel as well as scientific leader of a Nordic and a Swedish Research School in Interdisciplinary Gender Studies. She has published extensively on feminist theory, feminist cultural studies and feminist technoscience studies, among others books such as *Between Monsters, Goddesses and Cyborgs. Feminist Confrontations with Science, Medicine and Cyberspace* (with Rosi Braidotti) (1996), *Cosmodolphins. Feminist Cultural Studies of Technology, Animals and the Sacred* (with Mette Bryld) (2000) and *Bits of Life* (with Anneke Smelik) (forthcoming 2008).

**Elzbieta Oleksy** is Professor of the Humanities and Dean of the Faculty of International and Political Studies at the University of Lodz, Poland, and since 1992 Director of the university's Centre for Women's Studies, the first in Poland. She is a member of the Centre of Gender Excellence, GEXcel's international Advisory Board. She has been the president of AOIFE (Association of Institutions of Feminist Education and Research in Europe) and has participated in numerous EU-funded research projects. Her field of research is American Studies and film in a gender perspective as well as critical studies on men and masculinities. Her publications include *Gender—Film—Media*, (with E. Ostrowska) (2001),

*Gender in Film and the Media. East-West Dialogues* (with E. Ostrowska and M. Stevenson) (2000), *Kobieta w Krainie Dixie. Literatura i Film [Dixie's Women. Literature and Film]* (1998) and *European Perspectives on Men and Masculinities. National and Transnational Approaches*, co-authored with J. Hearn, K. Pringle et al (2006)

**Birte Siim** is professor of Gender Studies at the Department of History, International and Social Studies, at Aalborg University, Denmark. She is also a member of FREIA, Feminist Research Center at Aalborg University. She is, moreover a member of the Centre of Gender Excellence, GEXcel's international Advisory Board. Her research covers areas in gender, ethnicity, democracy, empowerment, citizenship and the welfare state. She has published extensively within these areas. Her publications include the following books: *The Politics of Inclusion and Empowerment. Gender, Class and Citizenship*. (with John Andersen) (2004); *Gender and Citizenship. Politics and Agency in France, Britain and Denmark* (2000); *Køn, Demokrati og modernitet – mod nye politiske identiteter [Gender, Democracy and Modernity - towards new political Identities]* (with Ann-Dorte Christensen) (2002).

**Barbro Wijma** is Professor of Gender and Medicine and head of the Division of Gender and Medicine at the Faculty of Health Sciences, Linköping University. She is a member of the Board of the Centre of Gender Excellence, GEXcel, and she is a medical doctor with gynaecology as her area of specialisation and a psychotherapist. Her research includes studies of women's and men's experience of violence in various contexts; empowerment of women vis-a-vis gynaecological examinations; to take control over the body, in relation to sexual practices. She has headed many research projects which have resulted in numerous publications within these areas, eg. "A cognitive behavioural treatment model of vaginismus" *Scand J Behav Ther* 1997 (with K. Wijma) and "Emotional, physical, and sexual abuse in patients visiting gynaecology clinics: a Nordic cross-sectional study" *The Lancet* 2003 (with 8 other authors from different Nordic countries).

