

GEXcel: Center of Gender Excellence
Linköping University and Örebro University

Theme 1

Gender, Sexuality and Global Change

Seminars April 24–29, 2008
Örebro University

www.genderexcel.org



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Introduction to GEXcel

Örebro University and Linköping University have been granted support from the Swedish Research Council for a period of five years in order to establish a Centre of Gender Excellence. The project is called *Gendering EXcellence - GEXcel: Towards a European Centre of Gender Excellence in Transnational and Transdisciplinary Studies of Changing Gender Relations, Intersectionalities and Embodiment*. GEXcel carries out new research and its wider aim is to become the foundation for a more permanent Sweden-based European Collegium for Advanced Transnational and Transdisciplinary Gender Studies.

The primary part of GEXcel is a Visiting Fellows Programme, gathering prominent scholars from all over the world. Internationally merited senior researchers and promising younger scholars with a variety of disciplinary backgrounds come to Örebro University and Linköping University to carry out thematically organised, joint gender research.

Research leader of GEXcel is Nina Lykke, Professor of Gender Studies, Linköping University.

Theme 1: Gender, Sexuality and Global Change

Örebro University, Aug 2007 - Aug 2008

Theme Leader: *Anna G. Jónasdóttir, Professor of Gender Studies, Örebro University*

The idea guiding this theme 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.

The research activities will be organised into three sub-themes:

- 1) Sexuality, Love and Social Theory
- 2) Power and Politics: A Feminist View
- 3) Common and Conflicted: Rethinking Interest, Solidarity, and Action

For a fuller description of the theme, see www.genderexcel.org.

VISITING FELLOWS SPRING 2008

Eudine Barriteau, Professor and Head of the Centre for Gender and Development Studies, University of the West Indies, Barbados

Kimberlé Crenshaw, Professor of Law at University of California, USA

Ann Ferguson, Professor Emerita of Philosophy and Women's Studies at University of Massachusetts Amherst, USA

Stevi Jackson, Professor and Director of the Centre for Women's Studies at University of York, UK

Maria Törnqvist, PhD in Sociology, Stockholm University, Sweden

Xingkui Zhang, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education and Social Work, University of Sydney, Australia

Seminar Schedule

Location: Hörsal G (Auditorium G), Gymnastikhuset, Örebro University

WEDNESDAY APRIL 24

13.00–14.45

Coming, Coming, Coming Home: Applying Anna Jónasdóttir's Theory of Love Power to Theorising Sexuality and Power in Caribbean Gender Relations

Eudine Barriteau, Professor of Gender and Public Policy and Head of the Centre for Gender and Development Studies, University of the West Indies, Barbados

15.00–16.45

“Bao Ernai” in China – a Contemporary Form of Polygamy or Sexual Exploitation of Women? Toward a New Approach of Sexuality and Gender

Xingkui Zhang, PhD Candidate in Education and Social Work, University of Sydney, Australia

FRIDAY APRIL 25

10.00–12.00

Global Gender Solidarity and a Feminist Paradigm of Justice

Ann Ferguson, Professor Emerita of Philosophy and Women's Studies, University of Massachusetts, USA

TUESDAY APRIL 29

10.00–12.00

Materialist Feminism, the Pragmatist Self and Global Late Modernity

Stevi Jackson, Professor and Director, Centre for Women's Studies, University of York, UK

13.00–15.00

Untitled

Kimberlé Crenshaw, Professor of Law, University of California, USA

Abstracts

Coming, Coming, Coming Home¹: Applying Anna Jónasdóttir's Theory of Love Power to Theorising Sexuality and Power in Caribbean Gender Relations

Eudine Barriteau, Professor of Gender and Public Policy and Head of the Centre for Gender and Development Studies, University of the West Indies, Barbados

My paper seeks to apply Anna Jónasdóttir's construction of "love power" to developing a theory of sexuality and power in the contemporary Commonwealth Caribbean, using Barbados as a case study. I engage in a triple play on the meanings of the word "coming" and anchor these meanings to black feminist theorising of the concept of "home".

I am specifically interested in the complications romantic loving pose for Caribbean women, particularly in continuing attempts to subordinate women. I want to track how these complications become extrapolated into wider systemic inequalities, even as these are simultaneously reflected back onto the individual relationships and their representations of gendered hierarchies of power and inequalities.

I intend to foreground my analysis in the centrality of Caribbean women's lives, as they navigate the intersections of the public and the private, production and reproduction. My challenge is to work backwards and forwards from the dynamics of that basic union (played out in private, intimate spaces such as the home), to contemporary developments in Caribbean political economy.

In everyday, Anglophone Caribbean culture, the word "coming" has an excitement and anticipation that I hope to convey in creating new theoretical insights about power and pleasure in women's lives. While coming is used to refer to the eve of the orgasmic climax in sexual intercourse, in my analysis I want to capture the exhilaration, tension and anticipation of coming to reveal another layer of the complexities of asymmetric gender relations in the Caribbean.

I intend to use Jónasdóttir's theorisation of "love power" to carve a new understanding of sexuality in the Caribbean. This new understanding should not only recognise its historically fluid and contested features, but seeks to explore desire, sensuality, pleasure and power in the rethinking of the discourse on sexuality in the region. Specifically I want to extend Jónasdóttir's theorisation of "love power" to Caribbean women's realities.

1) Adapted from George Lamming's essay, "Coming, Coming, Coming Home. "Address to the Caribbean Festival of Creative Arts Symposium. Trinidad, *The Daily Nation*, September 15th: 14-15.

“Bao Ernai” in China – a Contemporary Form of Polygamy or Sexual Exploitation of Women? Toward a New Approach of Sexuality and Gender

Xingkui Zhang, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education and Social Work, University of Sydney, Australia

This project takes the current practice of “bao ernai” (contracting a concubine) among Chinese businessmen and government officials as a point of departure for exploration of the relations between sexuality, love and social theory.

Sexuality is understood as a broad and complex dimension of historically changing socio-cultural and human-material reality. The project will start with discussions to clarify the definition of “bao ernai”, the Chinese context and the historical development of the phenomenon: What kinds of men and women are involved? How are the relationships established, organized and maintained? What happens to the women as first wives and what are their reactions? It will then summarize the reaction of the general public, the mass media, and the state.

The main objectives of the study are to investigate the root causes of the practice of “bao ernai” and its significance for theorizing gender, sexuality and power. Methodologically, the analysis will take a relational, complex, multidimensional approach by investigating the economic, political, historical, socio-cultural, psychoanalytic, emotional and bio-technological aspects of the phenomenon. The analysis also takes into account factors such as movement of people across borders and between different regions of a large country as China in an era of rapid global change.

Another purpose of the study is to contribute to theorizing the relations of gender, sexuality and love, so that it can cast light on the structural roots of women’s subordination to men.

Global Gender Solidarity and a Feminist Paradigm of Justice

Ann Ferguson, Professor Emerita of Philosophy and Women's Studies, UMass Amherst, USA

My project involves the development of a new feminist paradigm for global justice that includes several components. First is a new analysis of the concept of solidarity as it applies to the idea of feminist solidarity.

I argue that, given social differences between women which create unjust domination and oppression relations (based on race/ethnicity, religion, class, sexuality and nationality), we must develop a materialist feminist analysis of global feminist politics based around both a historical and intersectional feminist analysis of what kind of feminist coalitions are possible in the present period, given capitalist corporate globalization and previous national and regional inequalities based on European colonialism. Second, I claim that the time is ripe for a new progressive feminist Solidarity paradigm of Justice that supercedes the classical liberal debates between Libertarian (Neo-Liberal) and Welfare State Paradigms of Justice.

I will outline the anti-globalization economic and political networks coming into existence, as evidenced by networks of worker-owned cooperatives, labor unions, fair trade commitments, squatter and other land reform movements. Such movements are creating the material conditions in which North-South women's coalition movements, based not on essentialist but on transformational identities, can tackle such issues as reproductive rights, LGBT (lesbian-gay-bisexual-transsexual) rights, violence against women, forced sex-trafficking, environmental justice, unjust global care chains involving women's caring labor, and the feminization of poverty.

After outlining my general line of thought above, I will also engage in case studies of two of the above issues as they are becoming global feminist issues: reproductive rights and LGBT rights. It will be seen that a materialist intersectional feminist analysis will require negotiating individual rights vs. group rights to cultural self-determination on these issues, and will also require situating rights to sexual autonomy in economic and racial justice. The Solidarity paradigm of Justice suggests that economic alternatives to neo-liberal corporate globalization, not simply abstract proclamations of universal sexual rights or national state legal rights, are a pre-condition for all women and LGBT individuals to be able to exercise such rights in any secure fashion.

Materialist Feminism, the Pragmatist Self and Global Late Modernity

Stevi Jackson, Professor and Director, Centre for Women's Studies, University of York, UK

For some time I have been arguing that a materialist feminist approach to gender, sexuality and heterosexuality has to take account not only of structural inequalities, but also everyday practices, meaning and self/subjectivity. In this paper I will focus on the self, developing the argument that the pragmatist thought of G. H. Mead might provide a way forward.

This tradition has had little influence among feminists, despite the historical association between pragmatism and first wave feminism in the USA. Here I argue that Mead's conception of the self as process and his emphasis on its sociality, temporality and reflexivity might be fruitful for feminist analysis.

Reflexive self-hood is associated in recent theory with late-modern, individualised projects of the self (e.g. Giddens). This over-emphasis on individualisation has been contested by a number of feminists, particularly in relation to its alleged impact on intimate relationships (e.g. Jamieson, Smart). A return to Mead's insistence on the sociality of the self offers us critical purchase on these debates and potential insights into constructions of gendered and sexual self-hood in late modernity, linking the self to social practice and the actualities of everyday life.

In focusing attention on the social conditions of and for reflexivity it might also help in critiquing the universalising ethnocentrism of theories of late modernity. Western societies no longer have a monopoly on modernity – the different modernities that have emerged in East Asia, for example, call into question western assumptions about the “essential” characteristics of the modern self. Drawing on scholarship from and about East Asia I will suggest that locating the reflexive self in social context enables us to consider constructions of self beyond western society and western conceptions of modernity, while also subjecting western assumptions to critical scrutiny.

GEXcel Themes

- Theme 1 **Gender, Sexuality and Global Change (Aug 2007 - Aug 2008)**
Led by Anna G. Jónasdóttir, Professor of Gender Studies, Örebro University
- Theme 2 **Deconstructing the Hegemony of Men and Masculinities (Aug 2008 - Aug 2009)**
Led by Jeff Hearn, Professor of Gender Studies, Linköping University
- Theme 3 **Distinctions and Authorization (Aug 2008 - Aug 2009)**
Led by Anita Göransson, Professor of Gender Studies, Linköping University
- Tema 4-5 **Sexual Health, Embodiment and Empowerment
– Bridging the Epistemological Gaps (Aug 2008 - Aug 2009)**
Led by Barbro Wijma, Professor of Gender and Medicine, Linköping University, and
Nina Lykke, Professor of Gender Studies, Linköping University

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