ABSTRACT

The 2003 Conference on Feminist Economics New perspectives in gender studies on the labour market.

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Abstract: The 2003 Conference on Feminist Economics

New perspectives in gender studies on the labour market.

During the last 20 years there has within gender studies been a growing theorizing on the intersections of different power relations. The intersections between race, class, gender has been studied and discussed within a wide range of feminist literature. Inspired by postkolonial Black feminism and queerer perspectives (Haraway, D 1991, Mohanty, C 1988, McCall, L 2000, Wilson, R 1993) feminist researches have for instance illuminated the need of incorporating different power relations in an analyses of the labour market in order to grasp the complexity of today’s labour market (McCall, Leslie 2000). In Sweden this perspective has mostly been used within the humanities. One of the most central fields within Swedish gender research is that of working life. This field aims to explore and critically re-read both the Swedish labour market and the Swedish welfare state from a feminist perspective. This is a broad and heterogeneous research field that has provided us with important insights on how patriarchal relations create and reproduce a gendered segregated labour market (Sundin, E 1998, Wikander, Ulla 1999, Gonäs, L 2000). These theoretical and empirical insights have been challenged by feminist voices inspired by antiracist and postcolonial feminism (Knocke, W 1981, de los Reyes, P 1997). These researchers have asserted that the analysis provided by Swedish gender studies on the labour market often overemphasised gender relations and lack an analysis of racism as an institutional and everyday process. The aim of this article is – taking as a point of departure feminists intellectuals theorising the connection between class, gender and "race"/ethnicity within labour markets in late capitalism- to make a critical re-reading of Swedish gender studies with focus on the labour market, in order to illuminate and discuss the unspoken assumptions about gender, nation and ethnicity. These assumptions – I will suggest- are central in creating a specific narrative of women’s position within the Swedish labour markets and in Swedish society that obscures the position and the contribution of racialised women. I will conclude by suggesting that the changes in labour markets that have occurred in Sweden in the last twenty years cannot be grasped unless the hegemonic definition of gender, as isolated and autonomous from other social hierarchies is challenged within Swedish gender research.

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