ABSTRACT

GENDER CONSTRUCTIONS OF INTERCULTURAL COUPLES IN THE PERIPHERY OF SWEDEN

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Intercultural families or couples are rapidly increasing in number in a globalised world. In the periphery of Jämtland, Sweden, there are living a visible and discussed group of intercultural couples consisting of women from Thailand and men from Sweden. The aim of this PhD is to focus on how these couples are constructing and reconstructing gendered identities in different gender regimes in their daily life in this very specific context, and how gender thereby intersect with other sociocultural dimensions (or identities) such as ethnicity, sexuality and class. How are the conditions for these couples formed, and how do they create meaning due to the complex intersection of these power structures? And what becomes the effect of this in their daily life?

This theoretical perspective, in the context described above, will be presented and discussed in this paper. The ambition is to focus on the importance of understanding how much more complex gender constructions are than what gender studies up until now too often have assumed. During the last years the interrelatedness between several social dimensions have become more casual. In social work though, this perspective is still very seldom seen, so this study could be highly important for research in social work.
ABSTRACT

FINNISH LESBIAN MOTHERS – QUEERING THE HETERONORMATIVE MODEL OF FAMILY?

Paula Kuosmanen, Christina Institute for Women’s Studies, Finland

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Gay and lesbian families have been argued to queer the heteronormative family values by sharing the parenthood among same-sex couples and by constructing new model of chosen families (Weston). This paper asks, do Finnish lesbian families with children queer the heteronormative family model in their everyday life and how the meaning of “lesbianism” is embedded in parenting practices and everyday routines.

The focus of the paper is on how heterosexual nuclear family form is made natural by heteronormative practices of everyday spaces. And how lesbian mothers queer(y)ed these heteronormative practices through their tactics of shared parenting and use of everyday spaces. Paper describes how lesbian families are not outside of the constitutive practices of everyday life, like homes constituted round the idea of nuclear family by modern house planning, gendered parenting practices constituted by family policy of the Finnish Welfare State and “normal” nuclear family model of the children’s day care centers and schools.
While the nation operates as a major theoretical trope, it is normally not studied in a gender perspective. This paper investigates various formulations of nation and family at the end of the 20th century. The project investigates nation and family jointly in a gender perspective. Instead of speaking of ‘tradition’ and ‘post-modern fragmentation’, the analysis demonstrates that ‘nation’ and ‘family’ are articulated in new ways. In our joint collaboration between History and Art History, we demonstrate the role of nation and family in the programs of the Social Democratic Party in Denmark and of contemporary Danish art. This paper thus offers reflections on the construction and deconstruction of nation and family at the end of the 20th century. From this we propose that a gender perspective can dissolve either/or notions by pointing at changes in articulations.
The interface between Christianity and 13 to 15 year old girls in the United Kingdom is explored through the girls’ expression of values. The values of 9,447 Christian affiliated girls and 7185 girls of no religious affiliation are explored over the six value areas of: myself; my worries; school; religion and society; moral issues; and societal and world concerns. The data demonstrate that the Christian affiliated girls are more positive in their outlook on life, yet also generally more anxious, and more conservative in their values than the girls of no religious affiliation. The findings are interpreted with reference to the question of whether Christian affiliation is empowering for girls in the United Kingdom at such a formative stage in their lives.
This paper will discuss the possible link between certain doctrinal views and women’s leadership roles in religious traditions. The paper refers to Mary Farrell Bednarowski’s research on women’s leadership roles in particular churches, which documents such links. The presentation is based on Gunvor Lande’s dissertation The Vision of Like-worthiness. The Ecumenical Decade 1988–1998 Churches in Solidarity with Women in El Salvador and Norway, Kenya and Japan, in which Bednarowski’s theories are discussed and applied, and references to further research on this topic are given.

Firstly, Bednarowski’s research findings are presented: "In order to understand fully the status of women in a particular religious tradition, it is helpful to consider the views held within that tradition on four topics: the character of the divine, human nature, the function of the clergy, and the nature of marriage. Groups that have a positive relation to leadership roles for women are characterized by (1) a perception of the divine that deemphasizes the masculine, (2) a tempering or denial of the doctrine of the Fall, (3) a denial of the need for a traditional ordained clergy, and (4) a view of marriage which does not hold that marriage and motherhood are the only acceptable roles for women."

The paper will, secondly, question her findings and discuss their relevance for research.

Thirdly, the paper will explore practical values of these findings for churches and contemporary religious traditions in Europe: How does doctrine determine leadership roles for women in churches today? How do the four concerns expressed in Bednarowski’s research parallel those of contemporary feminist theology?

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ABSTRACT

Death – a reality beyond gender and language.

Catharina Stenqvist, Religious Studies Lund University

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I would like to present a work in progress concerning philosophies on death. I will put forth the following arguments:

- our urge to give life meaning has to do with the fact that our existence is circumscribed by existential phenomenon that we cannot control
- there seems to be a relation between how a person perceives death and his or hers developed life-view
- western philosophy has been preoccupied by death in different ways which is due to the androcentrism of philosophy
- existential experiences may be preverbal and alike regardless of sex, gender and class

I will analyze and discuss those arguments, which may on the surface look contradictory, through a reading of a few different philosophers and their views on death.

My conclusion will be: Death like any other existential phenomenon, is primordial. It is “there” and in no need of language. It is pure. But when we put those experiences into context they become genderized and powerized. How this is done will reflect our different philosophies and life-views.
ABSTRACT

MANIPULATION WITH DEATH IN WAR DISCOURSE;
Elements of Funeral Rite in the Pacifist Movement of Women in Black
during the Yugoslav wars

Lada Stevanović, ISH, Ljubljana

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From the antiquity on, the presence of death requested women’s interference through the ritual. The private, ritual sphere of the cult of dead is an area in patriarchal societies, that has been always used by women to intervene the public sphere. This paper is going to present some recognized elements of this ritual in actions organized by Women in Black and how were they directed against the dominant war policy based exactly on certain elements of the death cult and its heroic side. I will also try to interpret two opposite concepts of death inherent for militarism and pacifism in Serbia and Montenegro, relations to the funeral rite and the cult of dead as well as twofold use of traditionalism. First, its misuse by the state and nationalists who searched in it legitimacy for militaristic ideas and actions, and then subversive use of its elements as a strong reaction and confrontation to previous.

Key words: death, funeral rite, traditionalism, war, subversion
Since the last few decades, there is an “spiritual revolution” going on in at least the western parts of Europe. Christianity and the natural sciences, like technology, biology or medicine, have lost their hegemony in establishing truth among Europeans today. Competing narratives are growing increasingly, and many of these are in sharp contrast from mainstream discourses. This presentation concerns the negotiations concerning identity among contemporary Goddess-worshippers. I will examine two cases from my own field-work in England more closely and highlight the intersections of race, class, gender and sexuality, among existing discourses. However, I will also discuss these intersections and their embodiment in ritualization, creative work and even in the landscape.

The presentation will mostly depend on empirical material as witnessed during intense fieldwork. The methodological and theoretical underpinnings will of course be dealt with, when necessary. My intention is to see religion as a process, in which symbolic orders, experiences, identity, etc. are made manifest and re-evaluated, which means that the researcher must enter and participate in for instance ritualized space, turning away from scripture, belief-systems and myth.