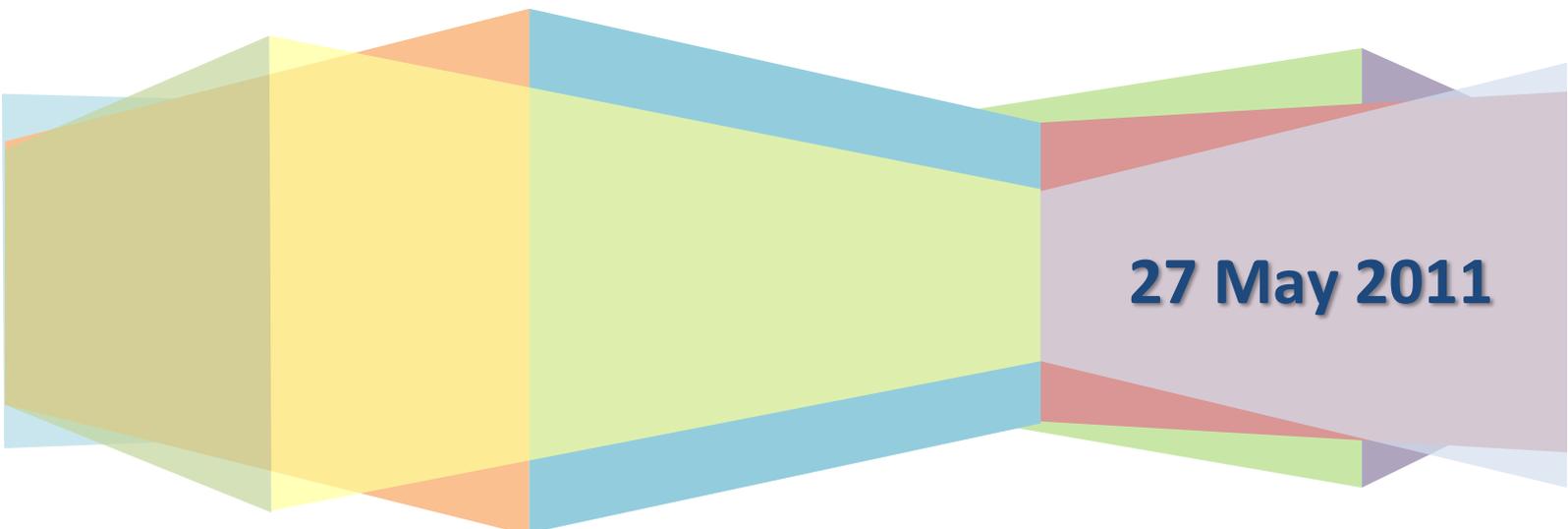


UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

**1st Annual Interdisciplinary  
Gender and Sexuality  
Postgraduate Colloquium**

Hosted by the School of Government and Society, the  
Department of Political Science and International Studies, and  
the Graduate Centre for Europe



**27 May 2011**

# Foreword

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*By Ali Amirmoayed, Colloquium Coordinator*

I wish to extend a very warm welcome to the 1st Annual Interdisciplinary Gender and Sexuality Postgraduate Colloquium. After months of planning and facing challenges in organising the colloquium, it is a great pleasure to see that the Annual Interdisciplinary Gender and Sexuality Postgraduate Colloquium has started at Birmingham, and I wish that it continues for many years to come. The aim of this colloquium is to bring postgraduate researchers together from across the colleges and to establish a vibrant intellectual community at the University of Birmingham. By organising and coordinating this colloquium, I hope to contribute to strengthening the network of researchers working on gender and sexuality at this university.

My idea of starting an interdisciplinary postgraduate colloquium on gender and sexuality at the University of Birmingham has many inspirations. I owe my first debt of gratitude to the Centre for the Study of Sexuality and Culture at the University of Manchester wherein I did an interdisciplinary Master course in Gender, Sexuality and Culture. While in Manchester, I had the wonderful opportunity of interacting with an amazingly intellectual community from varied disciplines and had the chance to learn from supportive university staff members across various schools. It was at Manchester that I understood the immense usefulness and vitality of the interdisciplinary dialogues on and approaches to the research on gender and sexuality.

I owe gratitude to many people who have helped in organising the colloquium. In particular, I owe my deep appreciation to Dr Shelley Budgeon who offered me help, advice, and ideas. I also wish to extend my gratitude to Dr Charlotte Ross for being engaged with the project from the very beginning. I would like to especially thank and express my deep admiration for Tricia Carr, the administrator for Doctoral Researchers in the School of Government and Society, as without her cooperation and assistance, it would have been impossible to organise this colloquium. I would like to extend my warm gratitude to the colloquium sponsors, namely Prof Colin Thain, Head of Department of Political Science and International Studies, and Prof Mark Webber, Head of School of Government and Society, who agreed to fund the project and act as the main sponsors. I would also like to thank Dr Nicholas Martin, Director of Graduate Centre for Europe, who agreed to fund the closing ceremony of the colloquium.

Many people have been involved in the process of getting this project up and running. I would like to thank the colloquium keynote speakers and discussants who kindly agreed to participate in this postgraduate event. I would like to thank all the Doctoral Researchers who submitted their abstracts to me, especially those who are presenting their work today. I would also like to extend my gratitude to those Doctoral Researchers who agreed to chair panels. I am grateful to Deborah Brewis and Alex Standen for organising the closing ceremony; further, I would like to thank Deborah Brewis for writing the colloquium call for papers. I would also like to thank Clare Anderson who helped with registrations.

Finally, I wish to thank everyone for attending the colloquium, which promises to be an excellent and fascinating event. I hope this will be an enjoyable and stimulating postgraduate colloquium for all of you.

Ali Amirmoayed  
Colloquium Coordinator



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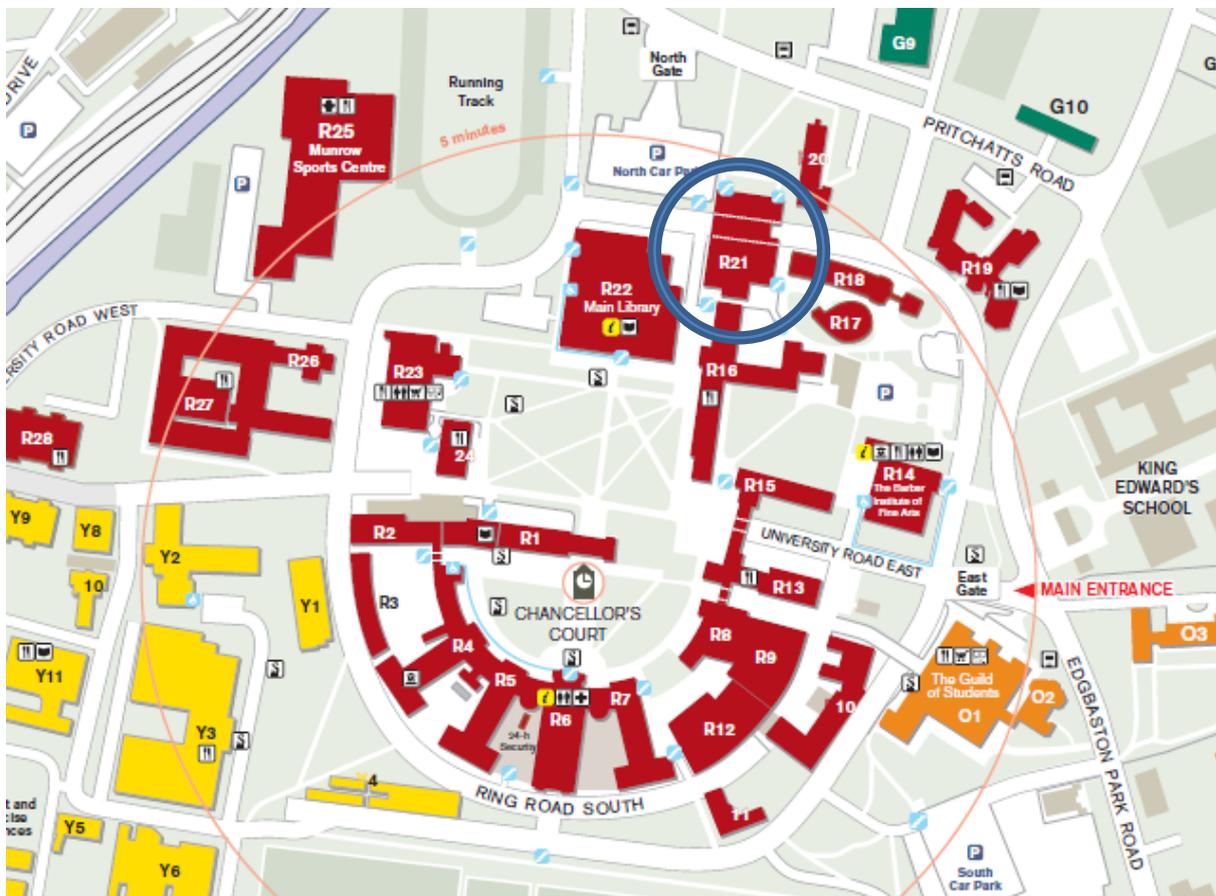
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**Colloquium venue:** Muirhead Tower (R21 on the campus), 7th Floor, East Wing





## Programme at a Glance

09.30 – 10.00	Registration and Coffee
10.00 – 10.10	<b>Welcome address: Prof Colin Thain</b> (POLISIS, Head of Department)
10.10 – 10.50	<b>Keynote address: Dr Shelley Budgeon</b> (POLISIS, Sociology Programme Director)
10.50 – 11.00	Tea/coffee break
11.00 – 12.00	<b>First Papers Session: Gender, Sexuality and the State</b> Discussants: Dr Shelley Budgeon and Dr Surinder Guru Papers by: Frances Amery and Holly Taylor
12.00 – 12.15	Tea/coffee break
12.15 – 12.45	<b>Second Papers Session: Gender and History</b> Chair and Discussant: Dr Lisa Alberici Paper by: Matthew Kears
12.45 – 13.30	<b>Lunch</b> (will be provided)
13.30 – 15.00	<b>Third Papers Session: Gender, Sexuality and Eastern Cultures</b> Discussants: Dr Shelley Budgeon, Dr Surinder Guru and Dr Charlotte Ross Papers by: Ali Amirmoayed, Rinita Dam and Nabamita Das
15.00 – 15.20	Tea/coffee break
15.20 – 16.50	<b>Fourth Papers Session: Identity</b> Discussants: Prof Sarah Colvin, Dr Charlotte Ross and Dr Joanne Sayner Papers by: Clare Anderson, Ken Searle and Lianne Vella
16.50 – 17.15	Tea/coffee break
17.15 – 18.00	<b>Keynote address: Prof Sarah Colvin</b> (POLISIS, Director of the Institute for German Studies)
18.00 – 18.15	<b>Closing remarks: Dr Charlotte Ross</b> (Department of Italian Studies, Convenor of the interdisciplinary MPhil in Gender Studies)
18.15 –	<b>Closing ceremony</b>



## Programme in Detail

**09.30 – 10.00** Registration and Coffee

**10.00 – 10.10** **Welcome address: Prof Colin Thain** (POLSI, Head of Department)

**10.10 – 10.50** **Keynote address: Dr Shelley Budgeon** (POLSI, Sociology Programme Director)

- **Feminism, Neoliberalism and the Politics of Choice**

**10.50 – 11.00** Tea/coffee break

**11.00 – 12.00** **First Papers Session: Gender, Sexuality and the State**

Discussants: Dr Shelley Budgeon (POLSI) and Dr Surinder Guru (IASS)

Chair: Jiesheng Li (POLSI)

Papers:

- Frances Amery (POLSI – Political Science)  
Destroying the maternal body: abortion, activism, and the social order
- Holly Taylor (INLOGOV – Local Government)  
Domestic Violence in the Criminal Justice System – Mind the Justice Gap!

**12.00 – 12.15** Tea/coffee break

**12.15 – 12.45** **Second Papers Session: Gender and History**

Chair and Discussant: Dr Lisa Alberici (CAL)

Paper:

- Matthew Kears (IAA)  
Gender and free non-citizens in classical Athens

**12.45 – 13.30** **Lunch** (will be provided)

**13.30 – 15.00** **Third Papers Session: Gender, Sexuality and Eastern Cultures**

Discussants: Dr Shelley Budgeon (POLSI), Dr Surinder Guru (IASS) and Dr Charlotte Ross (Italian Studies)

Chair: Maria Hilbert (Education)

Papers:

- Ali Amirmoayed (POLSI – Sociology)  
Understanding the sexual practices of Muslims in the multicultural UK:  
The interplay between religion and ethnicity



- Rinita Dam (IDD – International Development)  
The impact of being diagnosed with HIV in urban India: a gender analysis
- Nabamita Das (POLISIS – Sociology)  
Negotiating Hetero-normativity in Intimate Relations: Narratives of Urban Middle Class Men and Women in Contemporary Bengal, India

**15.00 – 15.20** Tea/coffee break

**15.20 – 16.50 Fourth Papers Session: Identity**

Discussants: Prof Sarah Colvin (POLISIS), Dr Charlotte Ross (Italian Studies) and Dr Joanne Sayner (German Studies)

Chair: Leila Mukhida (POLISIS)

Papers:

- Clare Anderson (EDACS – English Studies)  
Public voices, private voices: the discourses of ageing and their impact on the construction and expression of female identity
- Ken Searle (POLISIS – Political Science)  
Coverage of HIV/AIDS in gay magazines since 1990
- Lianne Vella (CWAS – African Studies)  
Coming-of-Age in the Caribbean: Gendered Identity Formation in the Work of Caribbean Women Writers

**16.50 – 17.15** Tea/coffee break

**17.15 – 18.00 Keynote address: Prof Sarah Colvin** (POLISIS, Director of the Institute for German Studies)

- **Voices from the Borderlands: Women Writing from Prison**

**18.00 – 18.15 Closing remarks: Dr Charlotte Ross** (Department of Italian Studies, Convenor of the interdisciplinary MPhil in Gender Studies)

**18.15 – Closing ceremony**



## Profiles of Keynote Speakers and Discussants:

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### **Dr Lisa Alberici (CAL)**

Lisa Alberici's research interests are on the age and gender history of Roman and late antique societies. She was awarded a doctorate in 2008 for her work on 'Age and Ageing in Late Antiquity: A Life Course Approach' which examined the impact of the ascetic Christian discourse on ideas about life course patterns of both men and women from infancy right through to old age. Lisa has also published on 'Female Transitions to Adulthood in Late Antiquity' which focuses on the period of the female life course between childhood and adulthood, and the effects of Christianity on this transitional phase.

### **Dr Shelley Budgeon (POLSI)**

Shelley is a sociologist who specialises in the area of gender and feminist theory focusing specifically upon processes of social change and the reconstitution of gender relations in late modernity. Her research has focused on the lived experiences of young women as they negotiate feminine identity within the context of individualisation and has engaged in debates about the impact of post-feminism both as a recuperative discourse and as a way to rethink feminist projects. Her current research project involves a critical evaluation of key claims made in support of the existence of a 'third wave' of feminism'.

### **Prof Sarah Colvin (POLSI)**

Sarah Colvin is Professor in the Study of Contemporary Germany and Director of the Institute for German Studies at the University of Birmingham. Her most recent monograph was *Ulrike Meinhof and West German Terrorism: Language, Violence, and Identity* (Rochester, NY, 2009). She was co-director of the major AHRC research project "Women and Death in German Literature, Art, Media and Culture" and co-editor (with Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly) of the volume *Women and Death: Warlike Women in the German Literary and Cultural Imagination* (Rochester, NY, 2009). Her current research is on prisoner narratives from Germany and Europe, gender and prisons, and arts in prisons, and she was prepared a case study evaluation of a project with women prisoners in HMP Greenock for the major Scottish Arts Council-funded *Inspiring Change: Arts in Prisons* project, which concluded in February 2011. Creative Scotland has since pledged enhanced support for arts in prisons in the context of this project and its outcomes.

### **Dr Surinder Guru (IASS)**

Surinder Guru is a lecturer in Social Work at the Institute of Applied Social Studies at the University of Birmingham. Her research interest is in gender and ethnicity focusing on the role of South Asian women within the family in Britain. She has specifically addressed



women's experiences of: domestic violence and the limitations of service provision in this area; the effects of divorce on women; the role of women in both transmitting and resisting notions of femininity, as well as their struggles against wider structural forces of race and class. She is currently working on the effects of counter-terrorism on Muslim families.

Guru, S. (2006) Working with Asian Perpetrators of Domestic Violence — The British Experience, *Practice*, Vol. 18, No, 3.

Guru, S. (2010) Social Work and the 'War on Terror', *British Journal of Social Work*. *Br J Soc Work* (2010) 40(1): 272-289

Guru, S. (2009) Divorce Obstacles & Opportunities. *The Sociological Review*, 57:2

### **Dr Charlotte Ross (Italian Studies)**

My research, which focuses on the Italian socio-cultural context, explores how bodies, gender and sexuality are understood, constructed and represented. I have published on literary representations of gender and sexuality, as well as on LGBTQ identities and activism. I am currently working on a project called *Eccentricity and Sameness: Lesbian Cultural Identity in Italy, 1870s to the present day*, which explores the discursive construction and representation of lesbian identities and desire in literature and film.

### **Dr Joanne Sayner (German studies)**

My research interests focus on women's writing, the politics of remembering and feminist theory. My particular areas of interest are gendered memories of Nazism and how debates about the past inform contemporary German society. Focusing on questions of autobiography and identity my research combines literary historical and cultural studies approaches.

Selected publications:

Women Without A Past? German Autobiographical Writings and Fascism. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi. 2007, 381 pp.

'The Personal and the Political: Remembering Adam Kuckhoff, Remembering Resistance', in *Antifascismus Revisited: Geschichte – Ideologie – Erinnerung*, Special Issue *Zeitschrift der Auschwitz-Stiftung Brüssel*, Éditions Kimé, Paris, Nr. 104, ed. Carola Hähnel-Mesnard, 2009, pp. 122-36.

“Ich schäme mich meiner Augen”: Photography and Autobiographical Identities in Grete Weil's *Leb ich denn, wenn andere leben*', in *German Life-Writing in the Twentieth Century. A Volume of Essays*, ed. Birgit Dahlke, Dennis Tate and Roger Woods, Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010.

'Gendering the Memoirist: Antifascism and The Politics of Life Writing', in *Political Memoirs Yearbook*, ed. Magnus Brechtken, Oldenbourg (forthcoming 2011).



# ABSTRACTS



## Keynote Addresses:

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### **Feminism, Neoliberalism and the Politics of Choice**

**Dr Shelley Budgeon**

This paper will explore how a postfeminist gender order is characterised by the acknowledgement of gender equality as a social good. From the perspective of ‘Choice Feminism’ this success of feminism is made visible by the range of choices that have become available to women as traditional gender norms have been reworked through processes of individualisation. While the critiques launched by second wave feminism concentrated on the restrictions women faced in asserting their autonomy, these more recent feminist ideologies focus on the need to accept and validate the choices women actually make. This shift in emphasis away from the choices women are restricted from making towards an emphasis on validating the choices that women are making significantly impacts upon how the political project of feminism is conceptualised. In ‘choice’ or ‘third wave’ feminism a more individualised ‘politics of the self’ takes centre place as opposed to a more collectively oriented project that aims to develop an understanding of how women might unite strategically around areas of affinity or shared purpose. This paper will suggest that choice feminism depends upon a problematic resignification of feminist values and an affinity with neoliberal governmentality – one reason that accounts for why choice feminism has flourished in late modernity.

### **Voices from the Borderlands: Women Writing from Prison**

**Prof Sarah Colvin**

Prisons are border zones, and prisoners exist in liminal space, neither inside society nor (yet) fully expelled from it. For some prisoners in some contexts, expulsion or even execution rather than a return to society is on the “other side” of incarceration. Prisons tend to social invisibility and women prisoners to “hyperinvisibility”; because systems assume male prisoners (an assumption which is around 95% true), women prisoners are marginal even within the marginal institution. The *idea* of the female offender, however, attracts a fascinated repugnance. Women in prison are hypervisible in the voyeuristic or pornographic imagination as the “deserving” object of sadistic sexual practices. In the news, criminal women are often rendered spectacular as failed, bad, or perverse mothers.

This article explores not only the invisibility of women in the border zone of prison but the objectification of female offenders as “bad girls,” their social shaming or stigmatization as bad mothers, and finally their subjective responses to that as writers.



# First Papers Session: Gender, Sexuality and the State

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*Discussants: Dr Shelley Budgeon (POLISIS) and Dr Surinder Guru (IASS)*

*Chair: Jiesheng Li (POLISIS)*

## **Destroying the maternal body: abortion, activism, and the social order**

Frances Amery (POLISIS - Political Science)

The politics of abortion is often associated with a clear-cut confrontation between the foetus' 'right to life' and the pregnant woman's 'right to choose'. While this view of the debate is not entirely inaccurate, with opponents splitting into 'pro-life' and 'pro-choice' camps, it does serve to mask much of the significance of legal and freely available abortion. Abortion rights, as well as indicating an expansion of 'choice' for women, are potentially hugely disruptive of the social order, having implications for sexuality, gender roles, the family, and the sexual division of labour, as well as for the meanings of motherhood and women's bodies. This paper asks what it means to engage in reproductive rights activism, particularly 'pro-choice' activism, if this is the case, and argues that state responses to demands for legal abortion often betray a better understanding of the radical implications of easy-to-access abortion than much pro-choice activism and attempt to mitigate these implications. It outlines the need for future 'pro-choice' activism to be grounded in a coherent feminist understanding of reproductive rights which goes beyond the rhetoric of a 'right to choose' and reflects the deep social implications of abortion on demand. Further to this, it suggests some potential future strategies for pro-choice activism in the UK, such as tackling the 'medicalisation' of abortion in British law and culture.

## **Domestic Violence in the Criminal Justice System – Mind the Justice Gap!**

Holly Taylor (INLOGOV – Local Government)

Domestic violence is predominantly a form of violence against women and exists within a patriarchal state that privileges the rights of men over women. As such, the Criminal Justice System's (CJS) approach to dealing with crimes of this nature have been criticized for failing to hold offenders to account – this is evidenced in prosecution rates that vary nationally between 55% and 9%. The Labour Government introduced a number of interventions that sought to improve the response of the CJS to this crime. This thesis is using the methodology of realistic evaluation (Pawson and Tilley 1997) to identify in what circumstances and in what respects, these interventions have led to increased prosecution rates for domestic violence. The empirical work analyses files from Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid



who are part of the Specialist Domestic Violence Court process, and compares cases from 2009/10 and 2010/11. The significance of this yearly comparison is to identify whether cost-saving measures introduced by West Midlands Police in April 2010, have had any impact on the prosecution of these offences. By using the framework of realistic evaluation this thesis will produce findings that can determine which aspects of the Labour Governments interventions have improved prosecution rates, but more importantly, it will identify the contexts within which this has occurred. Context is central to this research, as not only does violence against women exist within a patriarchal *legal* system, it exists within a patriarchal *society* in which many feminist writers have highlighted the disproportionate impact of recent welfare changes and cuts to frontline services upon women; ultimately impacting upon their ability to flee violent relationships.



## Second Papers Session: Gender and History

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*Chair and Discussant: Dr Lisa Alberici (CAL)*

### **Gender and free non-citizens in classical Athens**

By Matthew Kears (IAA)

Citizenship in democratic (fourth- and fifth-century BC) Athens was closely bound up with ideas of gender, and masculinity in particular. When addressing the democratic assembly or law courts, for example, speakers would refer to their citizen audience as *andres Athēnaioi* ('men of Athens') or *andres dikastai* ('men of the jury'), and on the rare occasions when they granted citizenship to a foreigner they insisted that the recipient had shown *andragathia* ('manly virtue') towards the Athenian people. Participation in the democracy and its institutions was likewise seen as an essential part of a man's *andreia* ('manliness'), in contrast to the seclusion and anonymity that were the ideal qualities of a woman, according to our male-written sources.

In this paper I examine how free non-citizens of both sexes were excluded from ways of asserting gender identities and conforming to gender roles through the restrictions and responsibilities which were placed on them. Even when the practical impact of these restrictions was small, they had significant ideological meaning. Non-citizen men were compelled to acknowledge publicly their inferior and dependent status, for example through paying a special poll tax, and seem to have responded by stressing their own positive ethnic identities. Non-citizen women were excluded from religious activities and could be subject to the same poll tax as men; they were thus removed from the 'feminine' sphere of female cult activity and placed in the 'masculine' public arena. Marriage between a citizen and a non-citizen was forbidden, putting any relationship between them on an informal level which denied them the respect and acknowledgement they would traditionally have been accorded. These legal restrictions may, however, have had the ironic effect of freeing non-citizens from some of the limitations of gender roles, enabling them to subvert or avoid social expectations to conform for their own advantage.



## Third Papers Session: Gender, Sexuality and Eastern Cultures

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*Discussants: Dr Shelley Budgeon (POLISIS), Dr Surinder Guru (IASS) and Dr Charlotte Ross (Italian Studies)*

*Chair: Maria Hilbert (Education)*

### **Understanding the sexual practices of Muslims in the multicultural UK: The interplay between religion and ethnicity**

Ali Amirmoayed (POLISIS – Sociology)

There are some interesting opportunities to study the sexual practices of Muslims in the UK. Referring to a recent remark by the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, wherein he criticised ‘state multiculturalism’ and suggested its failure, I will critically evaluate the interaction between the multicultural state and the sexual practices of Muslims; that is, I will investigate whether the state can influence such practices to a certain degree and the manner in which these practices may challenge the state.

I will also argue that new studies on family life and intimate relationships should consider the ways in which multiple aspects of one’s identity, such as religion and ethnicity, could shape one’s sexual experiences. More especially, I will argue that to gain a deeper insight into such practices within Muslim communities, we should carefully distinguish between religion and culture. To aid my discussion, I will refer to the ‘easy meat’ remark made by the former Home Secretary, Jack Straw, and his comments on a case of sexual abuse by some British Pakistani men with Muslim backgrounds. In light of this, I will argue that considering ‘British Muslims’ as a unique community that follows the same sexual practices is an inappropriate methodological approach; and therefore, ‘British Muslims’ is a wrong category to centre academic debates on. In addition, it is problematic to regard the common sexual practices of the members of Muslim communities as ‘Islamic practices’, because even Muslims themselves do not agree with each other in terms of defining Islamic practices. I will demonstrate this by analysing how the Sunni and Shia branches of Islam are different with respect to sexual practices and how different forms of such practices exist within each sect. I therefore suggest that this field of research should shift its focus conceptually from religion to ethnicity and concentrate on the cultural dimension of sexual practices rather than emphasise on the religious aspects of the same.

By discussing these religious and cultural variations, I will highlight the complexity in understanding sexual partnering practices within minority ethnic communities—an aspect that has not been widely explored by studies on transnational families. I will conclude my



paper by critically examining and assessing the current theorisation of family life and intimate relationships within the realm of sociology, which may help in further refining the conceptual field.

### **The impact of being diagnosed with HIV in urban India: a gender analysis**

Rinita Dam (IDD – Development studies)

This paper draws on interviews with a sample of 59 people for whom the diagnosis of HIV made an impact on their lives in terms of (1) how they thought partners, household members, neighbours and people within the society would see them (perceived stigma) and (2) the effects of partner notification and disclosure of HIV status to households, wider families, neighbours and others (enacted stigma).

As noted by Kelly (1992), people who have a chronic illness feel that they do not fit into the norm of the society and are often seen in a negative light, which can lead to their sense of self and identity to be fragile and shifting, leading them to have a fear of sharing their positive status to their neighbours or society in general – a view confirmed by the responses in this research. As noted by Hays et al (1993), PLHA are often concerned about disclosing their status to their employers for fear they will be discriminated against and harassed and one example was found in this study. Similarly, studies carried out by Chandra et al., (2003) and Nyblade et al., (2003) suggest that the reasons people do not disclose their status to their household members and neighbours include a feeling that they would be a disgrace to their families and themselves as well as feeling a sense of futility and fear of what will happen in the future. These findings are similar to the ones found in this research. Studies in parts of Africa and Asia have also shown that women with HIV/AIDS appear to get the major impact of the illness when it came to both perceived and enacted stigma compared to men with HIV/AIDS. This is because women were afraid of disclosing their HIV-status status to their husbands in the fear of physical violence or divorce, whereas, it appears to be that men prefer to share their HIV status with their wives in anticipation of supportive responses. These findings are however not similar to the ones found in this research.

This research also looked at how women and men adopted coping strategies in order to help them deal with the impact of being diagnosed with HIV and it found men appeared to commonly adopt *optimistic planning* than women and when it came to *social networking with members from the HIV community*, women seemed to have adopted this particular coping strategy than men.

### **Negotiating Hetero-normativity in Intimate Relations: Narratives of Urban Middle Class Men and Women in Contemporary Bengal, India**

Nabamita Das (POLSYS - Sociology)

This paper seeks to understand through various personal narratives, historically and culturally specific meanings and constructions of hetero-normative practices in intimate relations, particularly in intimacy as coupling and within family through an auto-ethnographic epistemological position, which connects the personal with the political, self with society and



experience with reality. This paper seeks to re-narrate through subjects' stories, simultaneous resistance to, compliance with and confirmation of the heteronormative practices and imagination. In this context it is important to understand the meanings that subjects give to institutions of marriage and motherhood and also how their meanings of cultural and ritual symbols attached to such institutions keep shifting under continual construction. This fluidity of meaning-making challenges the putative judgemental dualisms underpinning the western colonial narrative on one hand and the nationalist anti-colonial narrative, on the other. Through a Foucauldian, post-colonial feminist lens, which appreciates the ongoing negotiations of multiple and contradictory subjectivities that vary across a range of discourses, this paper attempts to open up possibilities of talking and thinking about the language of power, agency and resistance without this language being necessarily assimilated in the hegemonic language of neo-liberalism or dissolved into an 'authentic' language of national or cultural tradition.



## Fourth Papers Session: Identity

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*Discussants: Prof Sarah Colvin (POLISIS), Dr Charlotte Ross (Italian Studies) and Dr Joanne Sayner (German Studies)*

*Chair: Leila Mukhida (POLISIS)*

### **Public voices, private voices: the discourses of ageing and their impact on the construction and expression of female identity**

Clare Anderson (EDACS – English Studies)

Contemporary consumer culture is built on the values of youth and the glorification of ‘the body beautiful’ (Featherstone et al 1991). This has given rise to a stereotypical female ideal which has dominated perception and embedded itself in Western society’s construction of female beauty. The process of ageing by contrast, is conceptualised as directly antithetical to the cult of youth, associated with decline, decay and loss. Women are caught in the middle of these conflicting discourses and are their most vulnerable targets. In a society in which women are still judged – and valued – by their appearance more ruthlessly than men, they are the focus of powerful and pervasive anti-ageing discourses generated by the popular media and beauty brands in particular. These procedural discourses problematise the appearance of ageing, offering increasingly scientised ‘solutions’ (Coupland 2007). A comparison with the communicative approaches used in the (still developing) male market shows that much media and brand communication is still based on fundamentally ageist ideologies and that the construction of ageing is still a fundamentally gendered process: pathologised for women, de-stigmatised for men. My contention is that in the context of this complex environment, the construction and expression of self –identity is more problematic for women than for men. My research aims to gain a greater understanding of the impact of these powerful ‘public voices’ on the ‘private voices’ of women’s self-identity.

My investigation into this issue uses lexicographical tools, corpus and multimodal analysis. My initial data consists of a range of editorial texts and skincare advertisements aimed at both women and men. My aim in this presentation is to show the work-in-progress results of this exploration. This work forms part of my PhD thesis.

### **Coverage of HIV/AIDS in gay magazines since 1990**

Ken Searle (POLISIS - Political Science)

My empirical study relates to arguments that, since the emergence of HIV/AIDS, gay men have undergone an explicitly “straight-acting” identity, particularly regarding muscular bodies. Straight male identity has been undertaken, authors have argued, to avoid directly



identifying with signifiers associated with HIV/AIDS. In doing this, gay men are frequently attempting to produce a sexual identity similar to that of straight identity. Therefore, this paper will study how the role of HIV/AIDS has impacted on gay male identity, using coverage within gay British magazines within the 1990s and the late 2000s to illustrate cultural shifts. Here, it will be important to specifically study key signifiers and articles related to HIV/AIDS, as well as comparing the tone of advertisements within gay magazines from the 1990s to magazines published over the last three years or so – not only in relation to HIV/AIDS, but also towards the extent the magazines demonstrate gay men to have undertaken a straight-acting identity based around more upbeat material, as opposed to advertisements that emphasise a nature of victimhood. My PhD as a whole covers changing trends of masculinity in gay men in the UK since 1985, and specifically studies to what extent gay men in the UK have developed an independent identity. By studying how HIV/AIDS has affected gay identity, this can help my PhD as a whole develop as it can help me establish how HIV/AIDS has caused gay men in Britain have considered themselves different to straight men, and how this has affected their masculinity in the 1990s in comparison to recent times

### **Coming-of-Age in the Caribbean: Gendered Identity Formation in the Work of Caribbean Women Writers**

By Lianne Vella (CWAS - African Studies)

The *bildungsroman* genre, which emerged from 19<sup>th</sup> century German literature, has long been associated with the male tradition. It is a particularly masculine model of identity formation, which centres on a linear progression from childhood to adulthood with certain tropes which define the genre such as, the process of apprenticeship, negotiating relationships with father figures, a journey from family surroundings into a wider world and finally, the achievement of a coherent stable sense of self.

Early Caribbean writers, such as George Lamming, took up the *bildungsroman* and, following this European model, set their journeys into selfhood in the Caribbean without significantly altering the patterns embedded in the older proponents of the genre. Later women writers however, have broken the mould set by their forefathers and are expanding this genre to express the narratives of becoming of female protagonists.

This paper discusses how this European and masculine form has been developed and adapted by Caribbean women writers to portray a female coming-of-age. Focusing on contemporary writers such as Jamaica Kincaid, Michele Cliff and Julia Alvarez this paper will explore the alterations which female authors have made to this traditional model which subvert older ideas of a coherent, fixed subject. In the process I will be discussing how these authors use narrative structure and complex chronology as well as the exploration of female relationships and female sexuality in order to portray the complexity and instability of female identity formation.



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