

Theoretical-methodological Premises/Challenges of Feminist Perspectives

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Feminist Theories/Streams

- The feminist perspective means theoretical and practical attempts toward understanding, promoting and implementing gender equality. Gender-based inequalities are related to women and men, but also to multiple non-binary and transgender affiliations.
- Feminist perspectives belong to critical thought oriented toward practical changes. Insofar, an overcoming of patriarchal private-public dichotomy in processes of emancipation from patriarchy as well as a complex intersexual gender/based oppression have to be not only an issue of theoretical consideration but also of practical changes (in individual lives, policy making, legislature, strategic documents).

- 1st wave – suffragette movements in 19th century
- 2nd wave 1960s - Liberal, Socialist, Radical
- 3rd wave 1990s - Postmodern feminisms
- - Impacts of postmodern theories – criticizing/deconstructing general narratives embedded in white, middle class, binary discourse existent within 2nd wave feminisms; self-reflexive criticism within feminism itself fosters different outcomes
- Overcoming West-centrism (often racially segregated feminism) under impacts of critical race feminism, decolonial and postcolonial feminisms, Global South critical feminisms
- Impacts of queer theories and LGBTQ+ struggle for recognition; mutual crossing/matching/conflicts between feminist theory and queer theory; gender and sexuality as two discourses have to be brought into alignment
- Impacts of mutual crossing/matching/conflicts between feminist theory, critical race theory, postcolonial/decolonial theory
- **Resistant knowledge projects of antiracism, feminism, and decolonization**, plus **resistant queer project** (as well as queers of color, of Global South) mutually impact and match each other

Converging elements in contemporary feminisms

- Contemporary feminisms (liberal, socialist, radical), as well as decolonial feminism and critical race feminism, do accept certain converging premises.
- Main converging premises are focused on the dialectic of patriarchy and emancipation, and on intersectionality and diversity in the context of overcoming West-centric feminist approaches and overcoming binary gender perspective.
- Practical-political implications of resistant feminist knowledge projects
- Intersectionality merges, encompasses the best results of self-reflexive, enriched, more enlightened feminisms of today.

Converging elements in contemporary feminisms

- Acknowledging an importance of patriarchy, its meaning and genesis
- Understanding that patriarchy has been still existent but in a constant struggle with processes of emancipation
- Understanding that the dialectic of patriarchy and emancipation has to be considered at individual up to global level, and always in a concrete-historical manner
- Acknowledging an essential importance of overcoming private-public dichotomy
- Acknowledging that family justice and gender justice have been essential for justice in general
- Acknowledging an importance of overcoming hetero-normative, binary approach
- Acknowledging an importance of overcoming West-centrism
- Acknowledging intersectionality as essential for feminist analysis, because gender-based discrimination/violence/oppression has/have always been combined with impacts of different power systems, power imbalances, multiple discrimination (sexism, racism, imperialism, capitalism/class/exploitation, agism,) .
- Awareness about different systems of power embedded in intersections of gender, sexuality, race, nation, class and age (at individual, regional, state, global level) lead towards critical gender-based intersectional feminist perspective/s.

Dialectic of patriarchy and emancipation

- Patriarchy – Dominant model of social relations in private and public life in premodern times, public-private dichotomy, binary framework of relations, structural subordination and devaluation of women, inherent possibility of violence towards women and vulnerable persons.
- Modernity has led to establishing the dialectic of patriarchy and emancipation - political revolutions and industrial revolution brought elements of emancipation (universal rights – a long struggle for the recognition of women's rights), access to work outside domestic sphere, education.
- Horizons of women's equality were then opened in principle, but not in practice, necessitating the long struggle for women's rights. Women's rights were invisible in the US Declaration of Independence and it took a long time, from 1776 up to 1920, before women were granted an equal right to vote in the United States (with Afro-Americans achieving this right only in 1965). The same is true for the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, as it also took France a long time to recognize women's right to vote, from 1789 until 1944.
- Patriarchy has not been eliminated, but reproduced in old and new modalities, and it always happens in different concrete-historical manifestations.
- Feminist perspectives have to recognize how patriarchy has been reproduced and manifested, how the struggle with emancipatory trends has been concretely manifested.
- Feminist lenses/perspectives have to have in mind that times of crisis, wars, natural catastrophes, pandemics, As well as populist, authoritarian regimes lead towards processes of repatriarchalization, clericalization, retraditionalization.
- Feminist lenses have to be aware of neo-liberal neopatriarchy at the global scale

Neo-liberal neo-patriarchy

- The process of globalization has not been followed only by the reproduction of the inherited “old” patriarchy, but also by the appearance of “new” patriarchy, which may also be called, as suggested by Campbell, “neoliberal neo-patriarchy.” (Beatrix Cambell, *End of Equality*, Seagull Books, 2013)
- Neoliberalism brought extreme social inequalities in the form of the global pyramid/”Empire,” in which a small percentage of the very rich from all countries belongs to the top of the pyramid while a huge percentage of the poor from all countries belong to the lowest and widest part of the pyramid.
- Women and girls, as well as transgender persons, from all layers of the global pyramid experience gender-based and intersectional discrimination;
- However, poorer, less educated persons within vulnerable non-white race groups from impoverished countries, more traditional societies, more authoritarian regimes, more clerical state governance, do suffer proportionally more than women and transgender persons from more democratic and richer countries and less traditionalist societies.

Neoliberalism and gender-based discrimination in labor

- Rapid globalization and a culture of hyper-individualism have resulted in even more oppressive forms of precarious work across the globe, namely, brutal working weekday conditions for working women that are institutionalized in the interests of men, owing to the fact that women have primarily been encumbered by duties of care.
- Besides, women have been exposed to precarious and part-time jobs much more than men, as well as to easier and more massive lay-offs and more difficult re-employment.

Neoliberalism and Gender-based Violence

- Gender-based violence has been on the rise, while sex trafficking has become one of the most profitable trades globally: “Neoliberalism not only generates inequality but also radiates violence... Millions of women live in societies where violence or deaths is the penalty for answering back, loving another man, loving a woman, giving birth, going to school.”
- Campbell concludes sharply about inter-connection of neoliberalism and the general rise of violence/militarism/modern warfare and gender-based violence: “Crime and proliferating armed conflicts can be seen as a neoliberal paradigm: free trade unfettered by social responsibility, organized by unaccountable fraternities of police, militias and mafia. The most violent regions of the world are associated with the privatization of the public sector, policing and security. They become not so much no-man’s lands as man’s lands where impunity prevails. Militarism, crime and violence are contexts for doing or making masculinity. Unsafe cities and war zones multiply the arenas for rape and repudiation of women. Violence is not a sign of primitive masculinity or the collapse of civilization; it is its hardened heart.”

Intersectionality and Diversity

- Besides dialectic of patriarchy and emancipation, crucial analytical tool is linked to concepts of intersectionality and diversity.
- Diversity means that gender-based discrimination must be considered as inter-crossed with other bases of discrimination, designating a mutual crossing of complex sorts of discrimination, i.e. systemic oppression based on gender as well as class, race, culture, or sexual orientation.
- This multiple discrimination or systemic oppression based on gender and simultaneously based on race, class, and sexual orientation is also known as **intersectional discrimination**.
- Diversity also refers to extending the theoretical-methodological framework to non-binary people.

Intersectionality – meaning, dimensions

- It is critical to remember that intersectionality should not be confined to a methodological demand to consider all relevant features of the concrete person, because doing so wrongly reduces it to identity politics.
- Instead, intersectionality must be understood as the deconstruction of power relations grounded in patriarchy, racism, the logic of capital/exploitation, traditionalist habits, clerical norms, and so on, which define the various forms of gender-based discrimination.
- The intersectional approach must detect power relations within all layers of discrimination against women and girls, as well as non-binary persons, and must not be reduced to identity politics.

Convergence of different feminist streams of thought

- Certain feminist theories of justice make steps forward
 - Liberal theory of justice of Susanne Moller Okin (puts focus on family justice)
 - Socialist feminist author Nancy Fraser inter-connects principles of redistribution and recognition (**justice discourse** and **identity politics** discourse)
 - Iris Marion Young advances feminist thought on justice beyond liberalism, socialism, and multiculturalism, with outlining 5 sources/steps/aspects of oppression of women – marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, violence, exploitation
 - Silvia Walby discusses six structures of patriarchy – paid work, housework, culture, sexuality, violence, the state (*Theorizing Patriarchy* 1990)
 - Critical Race Feminism is most sound in promoting/imposing intersectional approach to contemporary feminisms (Kimberly Crenshaw, Patricia Hill).

Conceptual contributions to understanding intersectional gender-based approach

- Nancy Fraser (*Justice Interruptus*, 1997), socialist scholar, combines issue of justice and identity politics, **struggle for redistribution** with **struggles for recognition**.
- Struggles for recognition are not counter-posed to struggle for justice/redistribution, **recognition injustices and redistribution injustices have been mutually crossed**.
- **Political-economic dimensions of gender-based discrimination** or “**redistribution injustices**” are those related to the fundamental division between paid productive labour and unpaid reproductive labour, as well as the disparity within paid labour between higher-paid, male-dominated and lower-paid female dominated public and domestic service occupations.
- “**Cultural-valuation**” **dimension of gender-based discrimination** or “**recognition injustices**” are related to sexuality, subjection to androcentrism, masculinity, cultural sexism, devaluation of the feminine expressed in sexual harm, assault, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, stereotypical representation in the media, harassment and disparagement in all spheres of everyday life, attitudinal discrimination, exclusion or marginalization in public spheres and deliberative bodies, and denial of full legal rights and equal protection.

Nancy Fraser

- According to her, gender- and class-based discrimination require different remedies that are nonetheless interlinked.
- Intersections of class, race, gender, and sexuality call for coalition building among social movements that attempt to transforming deep structures of both political economy and culture/identities.
- Her intersectional insights differentiate and combine aspects of gender-based class exploitation and racial discrimination, namely, redistribution injustice (class, race and gender based divisions of labour), on one hand, with recognition injustice related to Eurocentrism and privileging whiteness, accompanied with cultural gender-based racism (devaluation and disparagement of people of colour, particularly women of colour), on another hand.

Iris Morion Young – Five Phases of Oppression, 1990. (*Intersecting Voices*, 1997, *Responsibility for Justice*, 2014)

- Iris Marion Young advances feminist thought on justice beyond liberalism, socialism, and multiculturalism. She does not have an exclusive focus on gender but includes gender-based oppression in an all-encompassing intersectional manner.
- **Marginalization** - groups of individuals who are “useless” from the viewpoint of a work-oriented society, like the elderly, unemployed, single mothers, the disabled, young unemployed members of minority groups, and native people.
- **Powerlessness** refers to all those who do not truly participate in decision-making, as well as all those who are invisible, silenced, and unaware of their suppressed capacities and their vulnerability to manipulation and indoctrination.
- **Cultural imperialism** - taking the culture of the ruling class and global centres of power as the norm, affects women of different races across the globe.
- **Violence** is the most obvious and visible form of oppression; it affects women and vulnerable/marginalized groups everywhere, even in the most democratic societies (Blacks, Asians, Arabs, gay men and lesbians) in a crucial way, with hate crimes and sexual violence as prevalent examples of violent oppression.
- **Exploitation**

Critical Race Feminism

- The biggest contribution in developing discourse of intersectionality as an analytical tool for understanding gender-based multiple discrimination/oppression and for understanding implications of social injustices and cultural injustices for gender injustice, could be attributed to critical race feminism - Kimberlee Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins.
- P. H. Collins – Intersectionality as analytical tool for understanding power plays (interpersonal domain of power, disciplinary domain of power, organizational domain of power, cultural domain of power, structural domain of power) (Patriacia Hall and Irma Bilge, *Intersectionality* 2016)
- Power relations to be analyzed through their intersection (of racism, sexism, exploitation), and then also concerning their above mentioned manifestations in different domains of power.

Mainstream Political Theories and Feminist Approach

- Traditional political philosophy had fully ignored issue of gender equality, modern political theories cannot openly negate universal equality but in most cases do hide ignorance behind neutral universal legal and political discourse.
- Ideas of gender justice emerged within some mainstream theories of justice, for example in the case of liberal ones (Rawls) and socialist ones (Philippe Green), even multicultural theories (Walzer).
- Philippe Green elaborates ideas about overcoming gender inequality as the constitutive element of egalitarian democracy. He interconnects unequal division of labour in both economic production/reproduction and biological reproduction as sources of gender inequality/ gender gap and gender injustice. (Retrieving Democracy, 1985)

Philippe Green

- He clarifies that even if there are no longer separate spheres for women and men in work, education, homemaking, and civic participation, if the division of labour in the sphere of reproduction is not overcome, women will still have one more obligation, which is always the source of their stereotyping by men and even by themselves.
- Work-family balance is necessary. Both parents should participate in the democratic division of labour in the production and reproduction.
- Violence has been an inherent component of the patriarchal family, which should be eliminated by the proposed family restructuring and overcoming the patriarchal sexual division of labour and consequential devaluation of women.

Summing up

- Let us reconsider manifestations **in different countries** of the dialectic of patriarchy and emancipation (six structures of patriarchy – paid work, housework, culture, sexuality, violence, the state), combined with multiple discrimination/intersectional gender-based oppression:
 - combination of **struggle for redistribution** (class and race) with **struggles for recognition** (sexuality, subjection to androcentrism, masculinity, cultural sexism, devaluation of the feminine expressed in sexual harm, assault, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, cultural racism, stereotypical representation in the media, harassment....) (N.Fraser),
 - five phases of oppression (**marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, violence, exploitation**) (Iris Morion Young),
 - power relations expressed in sexism, exploitation, racism and mutual crossing of different domains of power (interpersonal domain of power, organizational domain of power, disciplinary domain of power, cultural domain of power, structural domain of power) (Crenshaw, P. Hill).