Understanding Forced-migration and Refugee Narratives Intersectionally

THEORIES OF CLASS, ETHNICITY, GENDER, NATIONALITY, RACE AND RELIGION
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Discussion Questions

• Do all refugees experience the journey and migratory move in the same way?
• In what ways the processes of integration vary from migrants to migrants, and refugees from the global south?
• Why do states exclude forced migrants?
• How do men and women refugees and migrants experience the refugee journey and citizenship?
Discussion Covers

- Theories and discourses -
  - Structural and Discursive theories of class
  - What is ethnicity? Is it always exclusionary?
  - Theories of gender and social division – Is gender a system?
  - Critical race theory and deconstructive notion of race and racialisation
  - Advanced theories of nation and nationality
  - What is religion? How is it different from culture and ethnicity?
  - Intersectionality - Theories of intersectionality from Kimberlé Crenshaw (1886) to Avtar Brah (1996), bell hooks (1981), Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis (1992)
What is Class? Is Class Economic or Social?

- Is Class always economic and structural Or symbolic?
- Fluidity and heterogeneity of class in the construction /politics of identity
- Structural and discursive theories of class (e.g. Bourdieu, 1993; Marx, 1867; Marx and Angels, 1888; Skegges, 1997; Weber, 1978).
- Class classification and social stratification in host country is done through their ethnicity and nationality as much as race and religion.
- Class is relative, heterogeneous and situated - it can be exclusionary and inclusionary (Anthias, 2001, 1998).
What is ethnicity? Is it always exclusionary?

- An exclusionary and inclusionary construct (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992)
- The public, political and scientific uses of the word ethnicity have increased since the 1980s and the term is defined variously by scholars (e.g. Anthias, 1998; Smith, 1983, 1996; Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992)
- Hutchinson and Smith (1996) note that the meaning of the term ethnicity is uncertain because it can mean ‘the essence of an ethnic group’ or ‘the quality of belonging to an ethnic community or group’ and because, at the same time, it can raise the question of ‘what it is to be an “ethnic group”’ (ibid:4).
‘Race’ is a term commonly understood as dependent on the biological or cultural characteristics of individuals and groups (e.g. Cockburn, 2004, Hill-Collins, 1990). However, race is a social and political construct and one that is in process. It is a grid for unity, difference and division, and it does not always depend on culture or biology.

‘Race groups’ can be formed in heterogeneous ways, allowing Asians, for example, to unite and form identity groups with Afro-Caribbeans, ignoring Muslim-Bengali identities and Asian cultures and biology, and highlighting either skin colour or economic situations for the political representation of the group.

The discourse of race is interwoven with ethnicity, and race divisions are linked to ethnic divisions (Crenshaw, 1986, Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992).

As with ethnic groups, the membership of individuals in race groups is often determined by possession of criteria of entry, involving markers such as colour of skin and cultural origin that are primarily dependent on biology (Yuval-Davis and Anthias, 1989).
Gender is not a simple concept and feminists have theorised it from various stand points. Whilst some have argued that gender is a form of power, others have argued that ‘it is a complex phenomenon’ (Holmes, 2007:171).

Gender relates to the social organisation of sexual difference and biological reproduction. It involves social constructions and representations of these, but gender cannot be reduced to biology (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992a:18).

There is no essential natural social effect of sexual difference or biological reproduction, and that these are not an equivalent material basis for gender (ibid, 1983:66).

In discussing the ontological basis of gender Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1989) argue that although gender may play upon sexual characteristics, gender differences are not always based on sex or biology.

There is no doubt that other categories intersect gender and ‘help construct what is a man and woman’ in society. Some argue that the conceptual history of ‘gender’ is much shorter and “somewhat simpler than those of ethnicity and ‘race’” (Lorenz, 2008:43-46), however, such an idea should be seen as an ahistorical fallacy because the simplicity of a phenomenon does not only relate to its conceptual history but resides in its original history – in its practices and implications in everyday life (Hashem, 2014).
Theories of intersectionality

- Intersectionality, a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) and increasingly used by post-modernist and black feminists in gender studies, refers to the interrelations of different social divisions in peoples’ lives.
- Feminists (e.g. Al-Ali and Pratt, 2009; Enloe, 2010; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2009) have argued that an understanding of gender relations in an ethno-nationalist war is not possible without considering the intersections of ethnicity, race, class, gender, nationality, and religion etc.
- Understanding of migration, belonging and politics of identity are influenced by intersectionality of class, ethnicity, nationality and race (Hashem and Dudman, 2016, Marfleet, 2006).
- Categories such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, disability, age and nationality are intertwined in the formation of identities.
Framing intersectional constructs

• “While all social divisions share some features and are concretely constructed by/intermeshed with each other, it is important also to note that they are not reducible to each other.” Nira Yuval-Davis (2006:200)

• “Putting the terms of unities and divisions together helps us to see that within any unity there are also divisions, and within any divisions or boundary points, there are unities. The constructed, rather than essential or fixed nature of the boundaries becomes clear.” – Floya Anthias, (2001:376)
What does this image tell you?

This was the original hero imagery of the refugee summer school programme at University of East London, launched in late March in 2017.

What does the other photo of ‘No Feedback’ say? Why is this problematic that many ‘white’ women performing powerful gendered theatre?

Intersectionality and Representation
What does this current imagery tell you?

Is this a correct representation of Open Learning Programme and Wider Participation in Universities?

Why not??

The current OLlIve imagery
References

References