**To think is to experiment - 2003**

*Weaving Together a Berber immigrant’s World of Being in Paris*

Rosemary Collar, University of East London

My research is about migrant Berber women’s lives as a complex woven tapestry, a cultural weaving of many strands and colours. As a woman and a weaver I have threaded myself into a woven dialogue with Berber women in Paris and their families back in North Africa. I will try to share something of our experiences by visual means, threadbare patches and all, and invite your response to this presentation as a furthering of the interactive participation.

*Narratives of Elderly Parents’ death*

Sonja Miettinen, University of Helsinki

The topic of my PhD research is the now-common experience of parents’ death in the middle years of adult life, or more particularly, the cultural and social ways of confronting their death. The focus is in women’s position in relation to it, and the data consists of seventeen interviews told by middle-aged daughters who have recently lost their parent.  The interviewees were encouraged to produce narratives of their experiences and were asked to tell about whatever events, thoughts and emotions they considered important for their experience of bereavement. The narratives were coconstructed with the interviewer who probed as empathetically as possible the interviewees.  However, it seems that the narratives where told in interaction with other, multilayered social and cultural contexts as well: the cultural narratives of death, the institutional practises and the history of the relationship with a parent, which creates a challenge for finding suitable approach. Another important methodological challenge is how to make narrative analysis that would at the same time take into account the activity of storytelling and respect the narrators’ lived experiences of death, loss and grief.

*Self-Injury and Suicide: Listening to young peoples’*

*accounts of their experiences and understandings*

Steve Bradley, University of Central Lancashire

The UK Audit Commission estimates that 20% of children suffer from ‘mental health problems’. In response, the existing professional/academic literature predominantly focuses on problems with child and adolescent mental health (CAMH) services and how to improve them. What is singularly lacking from this service focussed literature is any consistent place for learning from young peoples’ own accounts of their experiences.

This paper details interim findings from a 3 year qualitative research project investigating young peoples’ accounts of their experiences of CAMH. The project is studying unsolicited personal accounts posted to Internet newsgroups, developing analysis from a narrative informed perspective. Initial analysis indicated that the topics of ‘self-injury’ and ‘suicide’ were of particular interest to the young people; of 289 posts studied, 24% discussed self-injury, 13% discussed suicide. Equally notable were the variety of accounts and explanations; their quality and emotiveness; and the depth of need that they suggested.

Many of the young peoples’ accounts appear to discuss self-injury and suicide in ways unknown to the professional/academic literature; whilst some seem to be directly contradicting it. A comparison between the narratives of self-injury and suicide gathered from young people and the received wisdom found in the academic/professional literature is presented.

*Gender differences in pattern of drug use and self-reported psychobiological problems.*

Raffaella Margherita Milani, University of East London

Previous research has found gender differences in both psychological and physiological responses to drugs. The present investigation explores gender variability in patterns of drug-use in relation to self-reported psychological problems. The sample included 768 participants, ranging from non-drug users to heavy ecstasy poly-drug users. The current study confirms that heavy illegal drug users are represented by a preponderance of males than females. However, within each drug-group category, females generally reported higher depression anxiety and physiological symptoms than males.  These differences were significant especially in the alcohol/tobacco and cannabis/alcohol/tobacco groups. Interestingly, in the male sample, drug users reported higher symptom ratings than non drug users, whereas women's scores remained constant across drug-groups. Possible explanations from a biological, psychiatric and sociocultural perspective are discussed.

*There’s nothing wrong with that child that you are not creating”: Mother blaming discourse or discursive construction?*

Janette Bennett, Birbeck College, University of London

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) has the distinction of being both the most extensively studied mental disorder and the most controversial (Wolraich, 1999). There are no pathognomic measures to diagnose children with ADHD. Diagnosis remains dependent on the observations of those adults most familiar with the child. Historic and contemporary knowledge of ADHD therefore rests upon a foundation of empiricism.

My research is informed by post-structuralist and Foucauldian theories of ‘knowledge’ and I have drawn extensively upon Foucault’s Archaeology and Genealogy. The former represented the beginning of a ‘paradigm shift’ away from science and medicine and towards an understanding of knowledge/discourse as representation (Hall, 2000). The latter informed the qualitative analysis of six participants’ interviews, each participant was interviewed twice over the period of one year. These interviews revealed that their subjectivity, identity formation and subject positions were seriously affected by *dominant* ADHD knowledge.

*Representations of Back Space*

Ros Watling, University of East London

The ability to successfully interact with the environment depends on our ability to retain and update visuo-spatial information of both front and back egocentric space.  Patients showing unilateral neglect following brain damage perceive left and right space unequally, and research on healthy subjects reveals a similar distortion of spatial representation to a lesser extent, known as pseudoneglect.  The perception of front space has been the subject of much interest, but few studies have researched the perception of back space by brain-damaged or healthy subjects.  The current study aims to measure the representation of both front space and back space in terms of possible differences of perception.

Spatial representation was assessed using visual stimuli in two experiments which manipulated the speed and direction of moving targets.  The stimuli were presented in 3D format using virtual reality technology.

*Humour in international advertising campaigns:*

*The view of British advertising practitioners*

Eleni Kasapi: University of East London

Humour is one of the most widely used communication techniques in advertising and it appears that it has the potential to be used effectively in standardized advertising (Unger, 1996). Broadly stated our main research aim is to investigate that potential by trying to find out whether there are some specific elements in humour that could be used effectively in advertising addressed to culturally different audiences.

For the purposes of this research project, thirty interviews with advertising practitioners and creative directors in particular will be conducted. This paper will present the results drawn from the analysis of first twelve interviews with well-experienced executives in the largest British and multinational advertising agencies based in the UK.  Basically this paper will attempt to outline the predominant trends and views, regarding the use of humour in cross cultural advertising campaigns held by a group of major advertising practitioners in Britaintoday.

 “Mirroring the Self: Representations of Greek Muslim Women in Gazi, Athens”

Alexandra Zavos, Manchester Metropolitan University

In this research I will analyze and criticaly discuss dominant (liberal?) discoures and representations of greek muslim women living in Athens, in the inner-city ghetto-ized area of ‘Gazi’.The purpose of this research is to use the analysis of representations of ‘others’ to interrogate underlying mainstream assumptions about subjectivity and identity, particularly at the intersections of gender, race and class, and discuss practices that dis- and re-locate power and agency. In other words, I will use these representations as mirrors of the ‘self’ – the ‘other’ is what ‘we’ are not.

Background: The greek muslim population living in inner-city Athens, in the area called Gazi, numbers presently about 4-5.000 people. They are a turkish speaking group, of gypry and turkish ethnic background, that have immigrated to Athens over the last 15 years from theprovince of Thrace in northern Greece, where the muslim minority of Greece is located. They live under very poor conditions are mostly unemployed, and have had no or very little formal education. During the past 6 years there have been several initiatives – institutional and private – concerned with the ‘upgrading’ of the living conditions and social and educational status of this population. However, these initiatives have mostly focused on individual rather than structural change, and thus, in their failure, reinforce rather than challenge practices of exclusion and oppression. The population remains to a very large extent unemployed, uneducated and poor. Furthermore they are being silently pushed out of the area which has now become part of an inner city regeneration plan.

Questions:  Some of the areas I will be addressing are following:

Who are ‘they’? Identifying representations of ‘otherness’ – articulated around notions of culture, race, class, including education and economic situation - in relation to gender.

How are muslim women represented, in relation to muslim men and other greek women and men? (e.g. muslim women ‘are very clever but do not go into education, because they are only concerned with marriage’, ‘families won’t let their girls outside the home and community’, ‘women are lazy and dirty, they don’t take good care of the family’)

Who are ‘we’? Identifying different dominant discourses (e.g. institutional discourses – the school, the ministry of education, societal discourses – voluntary organisations, personal discourses – other greek neighbours etc.)

How do ‘we’ construct them as ‘others’ and for what purposes?

What are the salient identifications – culture, class, ethnicity/religion, gender - that organise our relationships with and representations of this population?

What are the dynamics of power played out in the construction, negotiation and contestation of these representations?

Sources: In exploring and criticising mainstream representations I will use two main sources. Firstly I will be focusing on a documetary film by greek director Marianna Oikonomou, “The multi-coloured school”, portraying the role of the intercultural primary school in promoting the ‘intergration’ of the muslim population in Gazi. In this context I wish to examine how gender, education, culture and class are used as markers of ‘race’, thus sidestepping explicitly racialized identifications without however doing away with the boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’. My second source will be discussions carried out with the teachers working in the intercultural primary school to question practices of ‘benevolent’ exclusion and ‘othering’ and explore possible different grounds for understanding our relationships with the muslim population.

Theoretical and methodological framework: I will be using a critical discourse analytic approach, as developed at the Discourse Unit, to identify the discourses and discursive practices employed in the construction of representations of ‘otherness’. Specifically I will be doing a visual analysis of the film and a discursive analysis of the discussions, as well as an analysis of the group process. In my discussion I will be drawing on critical theory, feminist and post-colonial theory to explore different conceptualizations of the interconnections between subjectivity – power/knowledge – identity articulated in the object under study as well as in the research process itself. Particularly, I will be addressing issues of reflexivity and accountability.