Another Country: Explaining Gender Discrimination with "Culture"

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ABSTRACT

   This paper reports a study where students from several countries were asked to interpret short stories presenting a career woman in a difficult situation. The situation was sometimes interpreted as gender discrimination, but several other competing interpretations were offered. When gender discrimination was mentioned, students often asumed that the event was taking place in "another country," usually outside the "modern western world." These latter interpretations are further explored in the conclusion.

INTRODUCTION: GENDER AT WORKPLACES

How gender/sex equal are work organizations? Most western countries work consciously toward the goal of full sexual equality (i.e., gender justice) which in the organizational context finds its expression in various equal opportunity and affirmative action measures. This is also supported by a variety of institutional measures, or rather counter-measures against discrimination, at the societal level. Several studies document, however, that sexual discrimination persists worldwide, especially in organizational arenas.[1]

This situation presents particular challenges for researchers interested in gender issues in organization. The problem for investigation needs not be anymore "access and equality" – a central issue for liberal feminism – but "the perpetuation of inequality." Why, in other words, despite the assumed removal of structural and legal barriers, does discrimination persist? How does it continue? In order to answer these questions, issues other than determining the sexual composition of organizations (i.e., the "numbers" argument) have to be considered.

Diverse feminist theories beyond liberal feminism provide alternative approaches for addressing these concerns. These theories, in general, consider gender discrimination to be a product of patriarchal arrangements, a power structure where men have more power than women and more access to whatever society esteems. Yet, patriarchal structures affect both men and women – and how they feel about themselves – in ways that become deeply internalized (Flax, 1987). Bryan Turner (1984) offered an interesting explanatory concept for this process of internalization: *patrism*. Patriarchy, he claimed, consisted of systematic exclusion of women from the public arena through a system of legal, political and economic arrangements that favor men. In the majority of western countries such institutions are under attack or already disposed of. In that sense, patriarchy has fallen, but it has not left a vacuum behind. Its place was take by patrism, i.e. a widespread *culture of discriminating*, rooted in superstitious and paternalistic beliefs about women being inferior to men.

Both men and women contribute to the production and reproduction of the patrist culture in everyday life, but perhaps in no other place is this process more insidious than in the context of paid work. Acker (1994) has shown how, in a thorough re-organization of Swedish banks, gender discrimination was carefully reconstructed, taking on new forms. In organizations, women are continuously in a defensive situation, the defense being more difficult in that the attack is rarely open. Similarly, several recent studies conducted in Finland demonstrate the persistence of gender discrimination in association with everyday practices in the workplace (Lavikka, 1997; Rantalaiho and Heiskanen, 1997). No matter

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[1]   See, among others, Adler and Izraeli, 1988; Baude, 1989, Calás and Smircich, 1996; Collinson, Knights and Collinson, 1990; Davidson and Cooper, 1984; Game and Pringle, 1983; Heiskanen and Rantalaiho, 1997; Knocke, 1989; Morgan, 1984; Parvikko, 1990; Reskin and Roos, 1990.

which defense strategy is chosen, the differentiating one – "women are different but equally worthy" – or the equalizing one – "under same conditions, women are as good as men" – women's "inferiority" is reproduced by acknowledging a need for defense and justification (Scott, 1988). A vicious circle is formed: the efforts to counteract discrimination contribute to its perpetuation.

Further, as men and women interact in the organizational contexts they not only produce systemic dynamics which perpetuate discrimination; through these same dynamics they reproduce particular notions of gender identity which contribute to the discriminatory conditions (Cockburn, 1991; Lorber, 1994). These considerations point toward the need for organizational research that goes beyond the structural constitution of sex/gender inequality and into the realm of the social construction of gender identities.

Several studies addressing the persistence of gender structuring of organizations foster interpretive and constructivist approaches (Acker, 1990; 1994). For example, Billing and Alvesson (1993), Gherardi (1994, 1995), Marjosola (1994), and Mills (1995) have focused on symbolic processes sustaining meanings that give way to occupational segregation; Calvert and Ramsey (1996), West and Zimmerman (1987), Hearn and Parkin (1987), and Knights and Wilmott (1986) addressed social interactions and conversations that promote gendered social structures; and Kvande and Rasmussen (1994) documented identity-making processes of women in male dominated professions.

Still, gendering is not solely an organizational process. Its organizational manifestation is only part of the larger cultural milieu in different societies. Moreover, gendering may have become an important outcome of modernization processes, for contemporary notions of gender identity might be associated with westernization, internationalization, and transnationalization activities worldwide (Calás 1992; Mohanty, 1991; Ong, 1987). If this is the case, modernization might contribute to the proliferation rather than the eradication of gender discrimination. Such a situation would be paradoxical, indeed, as the universalizing philosophy of modernity, and its typical product – modern organization – explicitly denies and excludes such a possibility.

In view of this issue, we propose in this paper an approach for exploring current gendered self-understandings in different societies. In our view, this approach offers a feasible preliminary step for addressing possible intersections between gender identities and "culture" in the context of organizational activities. The approach, inspired by interruptive techniques of text analysis (see Silverman and Torode, 1981), has been used already by Czarniawska-Joerges (1994) to consider gender constructions in organizational contexts. Here we are extending its use in the spirit of Haraway's paradoxical partial perspective of feminism that "loves another science: the sciences and politics of interpretation, translation, stuttering, and the partly understood" (1988, p.589), and that permits the researchers to position themselves in relationships of partial connection – i.e., as situated knowers – to that which they claim to know.

STUDYING GENDERED ACCOUNTS IN ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXTS

We decided to carry out this study having been convinced by the existing evidence that gender discrimination in the context of professions and organizations is not only taking place through extreme cases of wage inequality or sexual harassment. We were acutely aware that these processes were interwoven in the tissue of everyday life but also that they were especially furthered by the way accounts of everyday life events are constructed and interpreted by the actors, both participants and observers, and often regardless of sex. That is, structurally women might be put at lesser or greater disadvantage throughout their professional life, but up to what point both men and women tend to interpret such events in ways which rarely assume gender discrimination as an explanatory aspect?

In other words, when confronted with an event that can be interpreted as gender discrimination by some observers (e.g., feminist observers) others offer, instead, what can be called "competing interpretations." This we have observed repeatedly in the course of field studies and even in our own workplaces. For example, a woman would not be given a position because, her colleagues would explain to us, "she had a difficult character", "there was a much better candidate who happened to be a man", or even because "it does not makes sense to promote one woman only." Puzzled and perplexed by this apparent unwillingness to recognize such events as acts of discrimination, we decided to investigate the issue more systematically.

One obvious problem was method. The difficulty in grasping and describing phenomena of

this nature is well understood by the ethnomethodologists: Such events are taken for granted. For instance, it is assumed that because of "advanced legislation" *civilized* people will not engage in discrimination. Thus, one way to bring these events to the forefront is by "garfinkeling;" that is, by disrupting the tissue of everyday life, or by taking them out of their "natural" context, as it were. The study reported here resorts to this latter approach. It originated in various exchanges of experiences in "foreign societies," where what is "normal" is seen as exceptional and thus visible.

How the texts were written...

The study was designed around a collection of short stories told to us by the women involved in the situation as actors or observers. These women considered the events to be clear instances of gender discrimination. We decided that it would be interesting to ask, would these events be interpreted the same way by others? Would there be a pattern in a variety of interpretations? We thought it interesting to ask for such interpretations from a certain group of readers: university students, well advanced in their studies, specializing in management, organization and similar topics: in other words, those who will in the future decide the fate of professional and other working women in Sweden, Finland, Poland, Italy, Puerto Rico and the USA.[2]

The stories were stylized by us in order to be legible in different contexts. They took place, originally: the first in Germany, the second in Sweden, the third in Italy, and the fourth in France.[3] We eliminated any reference to the countries in which they happened for, in our view, the events were not supposed to "represent" the "culture" of a given country; in fact, we thought they could have happened anywhere in a western country during the 1990s. Yet, as it turned out, a guess concerning the location of the incident was often key to the interpretation offered. The readers revealed what they thought about their own countries and what pictures of other countries and cultures they had.

In the stories, the protagonist is always a foreigner and always a professional woman. All the episodes take place in a "gray zone": between public and private, between work organizations and leisure time. There are at least two reasons for this. First, in our view this gray zone is growing as professionalization, globalization, and other changes (e.g., telecommuting) in contemporary work organizations continue to increase. Where does the organization end (i.e., the public sphere) and the family start (i.e., the private realm)? Corporations claim to be big families, meals are business lunches or dinners, while families enter the organizational beat with children in childcare, parents in eldercare institutions, and electronic workplaces everywhere.

Secondly, and as a result, the gray zone may be turning into the best recognizable site of the "global economy". While organizations and families still try to hide the remaining secrets of their "local knowledges", the "villagers" of "the global village", all know or imagine to know the "universals" of the restaurant, the airport, or the party given to a business acquaintance. It is also possible that while traditional attitudes in semi-closed communities such as companies or families are easy to detect once one crashes the entry barrier, they might be more difficult to grasp and sometime hardly visible in that gray zone of "formal informality".

Participants in the study read the instructions below. We took great pains into making the gender of the protagonists clear, in whatever grammatical code was appropriate for a given language, but we abstained from commenting on what we stated explicitly: that all episodes are taken for lives of working women. In particular, we avoided any emphasis implying that the events were "gender discrimination acts" for that would have precluded respondents to consider competing interpretations.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN INTERPRETING SOCIAL EPISODES

"Introduction

We are looking for cultural differences in interpreting social episodes. A series of such episodes

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3   The original study (see Czarniawska and Calás, 1995) contained an additional episode, similar to the third one here, which has been removed for the sake of brevity.

follows. Please, interpret what is happening in each of them. They are rather vague and incomplete so that you will have to introduce certain assumptions in order for your interpretations to make sense. While you are interpreting each episode, try to figure out what is happening and why. Describe the meanings and consequences of each action, and indicate why do you think that it is so. In other words, indicate what are your assumptions behind each interpretation. At the end, suggest what should the person in the story do next. In each case the protagonist is a professional woman between 35 and 45 years old. The episodes take place in different countries."

Yet, while what we wrote as an explicit purpose of the study was correct – i.e, we were interested in cultural differences in interpretations – this statement could have inadvertently produced a "cultural bias" in that the readers might have emphasized "cultural differences" in their responses more than they would have done otherwise. Also, it is important to remind the reader at this point that this study focuses on possible differences in interpretations (i.e., proliferations of meaning and understandings) and that it was never our intention to analyze the responses quantitatively (i.e., this study does not have an explanatory focus, nor does it attempt to provide a generalizable pattern of responses). Rather, our guiding questions focus *on the processes* through which particular accounts become reasonable according to the respondents.

...and how they are going to be read...

Volumes have been written on what does it mean to interpret a text; but if the discussion was previously limited to hermeneutic proper, i.e. interpretation of holy texts, literary theory and hermeneutically oriented theory, the so-called literary turn has recently introduced the topic to social sciences. Dangers of overinterpretation (Eco, 1992) are depicted in a vivid contrast to the enticing pleasures of deconstruction. But while we notice the complexity of this problem, we choose a pragmatic approach and borrow the way of tackling interpretation which suits our present purpose. We found Hernadi's (1987) interpretative triad very useful. He classified interpretation into *explication*, that is, a reproductive translation, where the interpreter chooses to stand *under* the text, as it were, aiming at understanding it (Frye, 1973). Next stage, *explanation*,

refuses to take the text literally, and employs inferential detection to analyze it, in that sense standing *over* the text. Interestingly enough, this kind of attitude can be said to characterize both the conventional scientific analysis and the contemporary attempts at deconstruction of the text (Martin, 1990). The latter extends, however, even to the third interpretative stage, that of *exploration*, where the reader stands *in for* the author, thus constructing a new text, although with an original one as a starting point.

It would be superfluous to spend much time and space on showing that the three stages are by no means hierarchical and do not even follow a fixed sequence; the classification is a useful device to structure the various ways of interpretation and, above all, the present text. In fact, the triad can be applied twice: once to show what our respondents were doing, and second to structure our own readings.

Thus *our first reading*, closest to the texts, takes up the three stages of students' interpretations:

• explication/labeling: what kind a situation/story is this?[4]
• explanation in terms of causes/motives; why do the actors involved in the episode do what they do?
• exploration/normative suggestions: although the instruction (see above) mentioned as only one of the possibilities suggesting to the protagonist what to do, an advice was always formulated and sometimes it was the only way of interpreting the episode. One can see it as the easiest way to approach a text, but also a professional inclination: after all, students of organization and management are expected to know how to give advice.

Our second reading goes toward a conventional version of Hernadi's explanation: it summarizes and classifies the previous reading, looking for differences and similarities between the responses and interpretations.

The third reading, or "reading of the readings", is furthest from the text and approaches Hernadi's exploration. Using students' interpretation as

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4   Some participants were very aware of the constructions involved in creating the descriptions: they would say: "...as the story is written now..." whereas other took a immediate approach, visualizing the episodes as close to them rather then engaging in a metacritique of the text.

Table 1. Demographic Composition of Respondents

COUNTRY/GROUP	SEX		AGE	
	F	M	bracket	average
• Italy (39)*	25	13	21–40	27
• Poland (46)	15	31	22–40	27
• Sweden (25)*	13	10	21–38	27
• Finland (13)	8	5	23–30	25,6
• Puerto Rico (77)	62	15	19–32	21,4
• USA (MBAs) (29)	13	16	23–42	31
ALL	138	90	19–40	26,5

material, we explore the issues central to episodes and their interpretations.

...by the participants

The participants were students well-advanced in their undergraduate studies or were in a graduate professional program, so that we might assume a common socialization among members of each group. Despite the fact that not all students returned their responses, the majority did. Yet, this does not matter to our purpose, which was to collect a cross-cultural variety of interpretations coming from young people connected by a similar professional interests. Our readings below will, unfortunately, distort the richness of original responses (only one group answered in English). Table 1 shows a general demographic picture of our respondents: country of origin, group, sex and age. The quotes which follow use the same code, e.g. "4F/M29" reads: response number, a Finnish student, male, age 29.

The Italian students came from 3 universities: one in a big city in the North, another in a middle-sized city in the North, and the third in a town in the South. They all study sociology of organizations. The Swedish, the USA and the Puerto Rican students were from schools of management: 2 universities in Sweden (Southern and Central) a Northeastern campus in USA, and a Western campus in Puerto Rico. The Finnish students come from a Swedish school of management. There were 3 groups of Polish students from the same centrally located big city university: journalists studying management, organization psychologists and MBA students.

The students received the instructions and the episodes all on separate sheets of paper, plus an extra sheet for comments. The instructions were given in English, Swedish, Spanish, Italian

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* Some people did not reveal their sex or age.

and Polish; here we quote the instructions in English. The episodes will be shown, one at a time, as we present the results and discuss them.

EXPLICATION: READING THE TEXTS...

"EPISODE 1: A Visiting Researcher

A researcher is visiting a foreign research institute for three months. After the first month the head of the department where she is visiting announces that the department is going to have a luncheon in honor of its two foreign guests (the researcher in question and another researcher from another country). About ten people come to the luncheon and the guest researcher is the only woman in the group. They all sit at a round table and a conversation flows freely. While the talk evolves, she notices that she is unable to join any conversation around the table except with the other visiting researcher, who is sitting next to her. After several failed attempts to join the conversation, she watches the group in silence. It seems that people don't even look at her when asking questions and waiting for answers. They look at her neighbor but not at her."

The most common interpretation read the episode in terms of group dynamic: it was seen either as *an embarrassing social situation* – for everybody involved, or, in terms of actions rather than feelings, a *communication failure*. A more specific label was a *breach of civility* – in this particular case, the rule of hospitality which makes hosts responsible for the well-being of their guest. A rare but existing interpretation within this type saw the situation as embarrassing because potentially erotic ("she is the only woman, which makes the first man to address her a potential seducer", 14I/M29).

In other terms, also used often, the situation was seen as an example of *gender segregation*

(where the fact that woman is alone does not permit for the "normal" development of the situation), of *gender discrimination*, or *xenophobia* – hostility towards foreigners. This latter label is close to but not always synonymous with the most general one, which diagnoses the situation as a *culture clash*.

Gender segregation, according to the students, works mostly through specialization of topics. Men have "male" topic: soccer, car-racing, boxing, hunting and memories from the military service, and they are most likely running one of those. It has been added, in an attempt to do justice, that the situation would probably be the same for a single man in an all female group, who have their "female" topics, like memories from the maternity ward.

Some students saw it as gender discrimination. The protagonist's rejection is "due to the atavistic attitude which the male has towards women, especially in situations where the woman enjoys a more prominent position than the man due to superior tasks entrusted to her" (7I/M24). Xenophobia is sometimes an addition to it. In this combination, though, the cultural clash functions as an umbrella-label again: "She found herself in a place where people are not too open towards strangers. Additionally, the natives perceived the man-foreigner more friendly, which indicates the inferior status of women in that society." (7PL/M25)

Some readers saw the episode as an example of an *individual lack of integrative skills* – the woman happens to be of a kind who does not know how to make contact in unknown situation ("this is a test of integration capacities which the male visitor is passing better", 3I/M24). This is, of course, both a label and an explanation, similar to another reading which deduces another personal drawback, *professional defects*. The woman turned out to be not as an attractive researcher as the hosts thought inviting her: "Obviously, during her first month, the woman was unable to perform her duties ... and failed to convince the director of her qualifications" (8I/F22). Now they have to carry through her stay in the name of hospitality, but their disappointment shows at such informal situations as presented in the Episode. Sometimes she simply "does not speak the language", but even her looks can be at fault. Here, however, there are two versions: either the researcher is "ugly", or she is "very attractive and this was the reason that the men did not dare to talk to her. If one does not know a woman personally, it is easier to talk to simple chicks" (13F/M25).

Labeling determines or at least directs both the explanations given and the advice provided. Indeed, sometimes labeling equals explanation. In cases where the situation is seen as demonstrating a person's defect – communicative or professional – this very defect is the cause of the situation.

Apart from such *individualist explanations*, two other broad classes could be distinguished: *structuralist explanations* (the situation as resulting from a junction of several structural factors, e.g. "group cohesiveness" and "minority divergence", 3I/F31) or *constructivist explanations* (the situation as fluid, the episode describing a point in a historical process, where antecedents explain the present state of affairs but do not determine the future outcome). It is this last case which inspires most advice as to how to reverse the situation, whereas the individualist and structuralist explanations prompt advice concerning the future betterment.

The advice given can be seen as formulated not so much ad hoc as in connection to and a legitimation of a certain type of normative discourse. Thus some follow *the rhetoric of self-improvement* (usually those interpretations which label the situation as demonstrating a personal defect). "In her country, she is that type of an industrious person who has time for nothing but her career. Her trip abroad was to be a crowning of her work at home. But during the party she realized that she is unable to cope with such situation – she does not know how to relax; works has become the only value in her life. Good that she has got a chance to realize that!" (11PL/M26).

Very common (throughout the episodes, as we shall see) was the *self-assertiveness rhetoric*, telling the woman to stand up for herself and her rights. Oftentimes "standing up" was quite literal: the woman was advised either to stand up and make an ironic toast, or else stand up and leave the restaurant. "I have a feeling that the woman is not courageous enough; [she should] begin to speak loudly about something that would make everybody else uneasy, something radical which belongs to so-called "feminine" experience and which has nothing to do with what has been discussed earlier on. In other words, I would like the woman to do something which would make her differ from the company even more, but as a stronger side" (10F/F23). This "rupture" strategy seems communicative and is close but not the same as the *communication rhetoric* – "bringing it to the open", where "it" might vary from a personal discomfort ("let them know what she feels"),

to an explicit discussion of gender roles. A more encompassing suggestion was *the management of the situation rhetoric* where the protagonist was expected to put the whole situation straight, for herself and everybody else (a rhetoric usually connected to the labeling as "an embarrassing social situation").

Similar but also quite different was the *strategic-manipulative rhetoric* which did not focus the protagonist or the other actors but possible advantages/disadvantages of the situation, and advised the action accordingly. Similarly externalizing (away from the person and the group) was *the lodging a complaint rhetoric*: in this case, usually complaining to the boss as responsible for the situation.

Unusual but existing were the suggestions, always following the label of an "extreme culture clash", which advised passive or active adaptation, including putting a veil on her face. Somehow similar, in the sense of repairing the situation through "repairing the looks", although not necessarily having to do with culture clash, were two suggestions that she should withdraw to the toilet and improve her makeup.

"EPISODE 2: Check-in at the Airport

A business executive is waiting in a long line to check-in at an airport. When it is her turn to check-in, a man approaches the check-in counter and places himself ahead of the executive. He starts a conversation with the check-attendant. The discussion is rather long but eventually things seem to be resolved and the man walks away. When she finally takes care of the executive, the check-in attendant does not offer any explanation for the incident. The executive thinks that the man did not even see her."

In this episode interpretations were most divergent. One, quite typical, was that nothing special is happening: there is no episode, as it were. An interesting albeit infrequent variation on this theme is the suggestion that the woman executive is upset because the man did not noticed her: "Is the executive so attractive that every man must pay attention to her?" (7PLM23).

Somewhat similar is the interpretation which justifies the episode. The most common is labeling of the situation as *an emergency situation*. The emergency can be the man's ("The man is probably there for the second time. He approached passport control only to discover that

his documents are missing", 8I/F22) or the employee's ("The employee looks the traveler straight into the eye and, with a subdued voice, reveals to her that the man is her brother. She asks the woman to forgive him as his controversial and distracted behavior is caused by a serious problem in the family", 3I/F21).

There were three frequent interpretations which framed the episode as clearly negative. In the first the fault was located mostly with the man, the employee acting as his accomplice: it is a *breach of civility, lack of respect for people's rights*, or, in simple terms, hustling.

The second interpretation moved the attention to the employee, who is guilty of lack of the service spirit ("I assume that this is happening in Sweden and I attribute this incident to the lack of service culture", 2S/F33). In one combination, the two belong together: the man's rudeness and the employee's lack of professionalism seem to belong together, in a kind of breach of not only civility but of civilization – or else in an institutionalized view on women which they share ("the employee assumes that the man has a high status and should be serviced first. The man himself is one of those who think they deserve to be served first", 11 F/F24).

The third interpretation labeled the situation as gender discrimination. ("This is a typical example of the male chauvinism – I am sure he saw her but ignored her, in accordance with the power position the culture endows him with by virtue of his maleness. It is interesting that she finds her place in all that and explains, trivially, that 'he did not see me'", 6F/M28). There was also an interesting interpretation related to this theme, which insisted on treating this case as *non-gender discrimination*. It is the matter of class and/ or personality traits. "If one has a suit and tie on, it is much less frequent that some buffoon tries to push himself in, compared to e.g. T-shirt and jeans" (1S/M26). Powerless people get discriminated against: were the employee a man, the pushy man a woman, and/or the executive a man, it would all look the same ("the problem would remain the same if in the line were standing a man, a child, or an elderly person" 1I/F23)

As before, some labels are already explanations. If the employee is unprofessional, the cause of the event is her lack of professionality. But sometimes the fault is with the man (pushy or chauvinist), sometimes with the employee (unprofessional or chauvinist) and sometimes with the woman, who stands there meekly and does nothing ("most likely she is insecure", 2I/M28;

"The villain of the piece is the woman's low self-esteem", 14S/F22) or, to the contrary, inflates the whole event.

The usual structural factors are taken up: it is happening in *our* country, because it shows lack of civility and/or service orientation ("this man is an Italian! he does not respect the line", 16I/M28), or else it is happening in *another country* – where women are inferior or flight carriers are monopolists. "This would never has happened in Finland; not if the woman was formally dressed. This is typical for a country where the woman's position is bad" (13 I/M25).

The advice polarizes: do something ("One cannot suffer in silence", 15S/F23; "Where is her self-esteem?, 4F/F30), immediately ("She might shout after him 'bloody hustler', or something like that, which does not fit her station at all", 10F/F23) or later ("the only thing to do is to lodge a formal complaint with the company", 14I/M29). The other line is to forget it, take it easy, or else do something to herself ("An executive and unable to deal with such a small thing – perhaps she should work some with her self-assertiveness, otherwise life will crush her", 3PL/F23). Refreshing the makeup is again in the action repertoire.

"EPISODE 3: A seminar abroad

A professor is invited to give a seminar at a university abroad. The day she arrives her host invites her to dinner at a private gathering. Cocktails are served before dinner. After all the guests arrived, a buffet dinner will be served. People sit around in the room, and soon the guest professor discovers that she is sitting alone in the middle of two distinct groups of people. One is composed entirely of women, who, as far as she can tell, do not seem to be close friends, at least not all of them. They are discussing the negative and positive sides of a summer resort she knows nothing about. The other group, all men, seem to be old friends and are recollecting memories from their youth."

This episode has many common traits with Episode 1, but for two differences: the party is less formal, the invited guests are both from the organization in question and from outside, and the protagonist is not the only woman.

The most general and often used label in this Episode, like in the others, was *culture clash:* the female professor comes from another culture than the hosts, the culture where women and men are

not segregated. Such labeling stands in contrast to another, less common but quite persistent, which classifies the episode as almost stereotypical in its commonalty: "This is a very typical situation; I have been in one like that many a time" (10F/F23).

Gender segregation is the trait of the situation which makes it so typical: "This is how it happens. In my experience, it is so that men stick to men and women to women. It does not make sense to try to understand why, as it has always been so and it will remain so! Besides I do not see anything wrong with it. Men have their guys' talk, and gals their gals' talk" (18S/M24).

We are then back to the issue of "specialized discourses". But, once again, like in Episode 1, it is the men who are having a "guys' talk". The topic of women's conversation does not seem to be "specialized" at all. In fact, as some point out, it is a typical topic for a group that does not share much in common and is trying to establish a neutral but positive communicative ground. Not everybody thinks so, however. One frequent interpretation is that talking about "tourist village" is somehow a proof of women's shallowness and lack of intellectual depth: "There could be a [worse] problem if the woman, due to her background, education, etc. didn't want to discuss tourist villages, but lacked the competence to take part in men's discussion or – even worse – felt that she wasn't allowed to join in" (3F/F23).

But, segregation or not, why is she sitting alone? And is it a problem? Some say no, it is only cocktails, the situation will change many a time. Some say it depends: "An American would consider such situation very embarrassing, while a ... Finn could be happy not to need to talk all the time" (5F/F25). Most say it is problematic, and one of the reason it is happening is *xenophobia:* sometimes understood as a dislike for foreigners but mostly as a dislike towards "strangers" or "aliens". In some cases, the woman's strangeness originates not in the fact that she is a visitor from another country, but that she is what she is: "Perhaps they think that she is a hybrid. Just think, a woman and a professor" (13S/M28).

The next label and explanation at the same time is *gender discrimination* and, following it as usual, the *negative gender discrimination:* "As before it is a discrimination, but not gender discrimination, as even the women talk about their things excluding the professor from their conversation" (13I/??). This insight will be repeated and we shall come back to it: gender discrimination is something that men do to women. What wom-

en do to women has another name, as we shall see when we come to the advice part.

A very common explanatory label is that of *breach of civility:* hospitality is missing. The situation is "produced by bad manners of her host, who did not have enough sense to introduce her..." (8I/F22), "An unthinkable situation, showing a complete lack of culture and good manners" (10PL/M24), "clumsy hosts" (10PL/M25). This opinion is complemented by an explanation which perceives the episode as *an embarrassing social situation,* caused by the woman's *lack of integrative skills* ("It is entirely her fault if she was left alone", 4PL/F23).

The advice part is most interesting. Great many advise her to go home; after all, she can claim tiredness, the need to prepare her lecture etc. Those who advise her to stay have basically two suggestions: to join the women, or to join the men (a few interpretations suggest that she should join the two groups by a clever maneuver). Why join the women? Because they are a less cohesive group, relative strangers themselves, is one suggestion. Because they are of the same sex, is another. Because doing otherwise she will antagonize the women, is the third. This last assumption might lead to an opposite advice:

> After a period of hesitation the professor joins the group of men, as their topic is more attractive and the women's topic is alien to her. But she predicts that her behavior will provoke women's jealousy; in fact, after a while other women join the men's group. How come she could foresee what would happen? Because women who do not show sympathy to another woman stranger are the women of prejudice, who gossip, women with no personality and therefore easy to manipulate. (10I/F24)

This response shows an identification with the protagonist; another one shares the premises but arrives at the opposite judgment: "the fault is partly hers, as she starts with prejudices. Not knowing the women, she judges them as not good friends" (1I/F23). And another answer, taking for granted the professor's dislike for the women: "I would join the women, if only to observe and laugh at their 'affectionate' relationship" (5I/F27).

There seems to be an agreement among many of the respondents as to the fact that the men's conversation is more interesting: "the men who talk about amusing topics" (11I/F24), "To have an enjoyable evening, it would be no doubt better to approach the men. It is a group which is more consistent and in general ready for entertainment" (2I/M28), "The professor turns to men as she is attracted more by their attitude than by

the specific topic of their conversation" (1I/F23), "No wonder, men always manage to communicate better" (14PL/M22), "the men have no need to talk to the researcher because they are having a good time all by themselves" (13F/M25). Thus, either the woman should join them, or else, even knowing that it would be less interesting, join the women, afraid of their sanctions.

As we said before, this episode is somewhat similar to Episode 1, but the readers see much more room for maneuver for the protagonist. It seems that the gender segregation situation is easier to cope with than gender isolation. The crucial choice factor is one's own identity:

> She does not belong to any of the groups, or so she believes. She perhaps belongs to men professionally and to women because of her gender. She would probably like to mingle with both but because of sex segregation she has to choose. Most likely she chooses the women, because the threshold to cross to begin mixing with men is too high. Another alternative is to leave. (6F/M28)

Such seems to be the fate of a hybrid when confronted with clear-category groups!

"EPISODE 4: Tenure Denied

An engineer joined a foreign company seven years ago. During that time she become a top figure in the research and development department at the company headquarters. She has produced several innovations, has published several articles in journals within her specialty, and has developed several professional ties with her mostly male colleagues. Now she is taking a short vacation, visiting for a few days with a friend in another country. Sitting in the friend's living room she confides that she has just been denied the customary tenure and promotion, that comes after seven years with the company. Instead she has been offered an extension in her contract for another five years. She does not know what to think about all of this."

This is the least ambiguous of the episodes presented, and most closely related to a workplace, although the scene, as in all the episodes, is situated outside an organization. The label/explanation present in all other episodes, i.e. breach of civility, is absent. All others are present.

There is a range of answers between those who believe that the event happened in "our" culture or "another" culture: "Most likely the usual 'incident' in Swedish work organizations" (1S/

M26), "This is a 'typical' situation for women, at least in our country" (11I/F30); or else "A Muslim country: perhaps it is 'inappropriate' to have a female manager" (1S/??), "Women's situation in other countries is more difficult than in Sweden"(4S/M27).

Another division goes across the our/other culture differences and concerns itself with the result of the investigation (done almost by all students) on *whether* it is gender discrimination. Those who decide it is (a majority does) see it in several variations. Firstly, it can have to do with the woman's profession: women engineers are still rare. Secondly, it can have to do with the position of power: the men are unwilling to share it with "an Other". Thirdly, an answer most common among readers from the two Scandinavian countries, is that the company is afraid of the potential maternity leave. Gender discrimination is in many cases seen as strengthened by *xenophobia:* foreigners are not given important positions or else, the company simply feels that the woman might want to go back to her home country and is not committed enough.

The group which decides against the discrimination case often points out the need to resist the hints already present on the story: "This is to me again a case where a woman is fixated on the idea that she is a woman in a male world rather than ask herself whether she deserves the position" (2F/F30). Those who decide that the *professional defects* are at fault point out that it must be sometimes a woman who is considered incompetent for a given job, very much as men are. "Not everything goes as one wanted it" (3S/F38).

As to action, practically everybody agrees that she should demand a convincing explanation (some of the Polish students suggested that she went to the CEO rather than to her superior or to the personnel manager). This in itself, some believe, will clear up the situation which must be a misunderstanding.

> It is simply Impossible that the detriment is in any relation to the fact that she is a woman; such explanation is unthinkable in 2000! Maybe she must work even more, maybe she is offered a different opportunity, maybe simply more time to show her fantastic potential. Maybe she is offered another 5 years just because she is a fantastic engineer. The reasons can be many, both positive and negative, but it is impossible that this complex situation is created by the sex of the protagonist. (10I/F24)

Most responses are not so optimistic, though. Those who believe that the woman does not deserve promotion advise her various ways of raising her competence or accepting the situation. Others, who believe that gender discrimination is at fault, advise her to look for another job and quit. Some mention the possibility of lodging a complaint, for example in labor court, but see it as an altruistic sacrifice rather than an action in the protagonist's interest. "Suing is a difficult way to go – at any rate it ends with quitting" (5F/F25). "If she depends on her job for living and perceives her chances to prove her point as small she must sit put" (5S/F26). "Depending on the reasons given, this could be a case for equal opportunity legislation, but I am afraid this way would be less advantageous/more disadvantageous for her than to look for another job" (2S/F33). "She must protect herself in the case if she loses her fight. If she has an alternative solution up her sleeve she can fight better, because very often one has to fight, and alone." (17S/M35). "The dilemma is acute: to put oneself at risk to get justice done which will help all women or to choose the most opportune way for oneself?" (3S/F31)[5]

Somewhat following the same dilemma, another group of responses suggests that she should withdraw from the corporate world and collaborate in attempts to create alternative institutional arrangements – either by opening her own business or by joining others who are in a similar organization. Even here the opinions differed: some thought that certain national or corporate cultures were discriminating while other were not ("it is the patriarchal system which rules in that organization" 6F/M28), or else that they all were, and she should "start creating autonomous situations where her professionality will be valued on a different basis (emphasis on projects and creation of alternative models)" (14I/M40).

EXPLANATION : CONNECTING THE TEXT TO OTHER TEXTS

We did not expect and did not find any clearcut differences between "Italians" and "Swedes", or "men" and "women". In fact, the most typical patterns of responding can be found in all groups: this is, indeed, what makes them "the most typical patterns". But there were some patterns to be found only in certain responses: in such

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5   These utterances come from Scandinavian countries and Italy – Poland does not have equality laws as yet.

cases we looked at what their authors had in common.

What kind of inferences can be drawn from such differences and similarities? The conventional way of reasoning leads from "texts" to "reality"; therefore, to caricature it a bit, if "Swedes" speak more often than "Italians" of "gender discrimination", one might suppose that this phenomenon takes place "more frequently" in Sweden. In our opinion, such inferences are invalid. As we announced in the title of this section, we can only try to connect one type of texts to another. We believe, after Rorty, that *"no* linguistic items represent *any* non-linguistic items" (1991, p. 2) It seems a commonsensical assumption that the readings produced at our request are not completely different, in terms of the dominant discourse, to the everyday discourse our student-readers are familiar with. Although no doubt an object of stylization and impression management techniques, the interpretations must belong to the students' domain of discourse. Thus, if indeed there are many gender-interpretations among the responses of Swedish students, the gender discourse must be present and accessible in their conversational environment. Some topics and some kind of rhetoric can be more common in one interpretive community than another; and this is the only thing we might speculate about with help of our material.

The decline of the civilization or the dawn of service culture?

The first three episodes were often diagnosed as a *breach of civility* in variation: hospitality (1 and 3), respect for other people's rights (as expressed in an institution of a queue, 2), and gallantry (1). More often than not, this was attributed to traits possessed by "certain people". "As I work in services myself and can observe various people's (men, women, executives....) behavior, I can tell that there is always someone who must 'distinguish' themselves in front of the line or the employee" (2F/F30).

But there existed two other interpretations which appeared only in certain groups. One surfaced mostly in the responses of the Italian students: the breach of civility signals something much more serious: the crisis of civilization: "This happens very often... there is lack of respect – not only towards the women, but in general, lack of 'civility'" (9I/F33). One classic example recalling the very wide spread Italian debate about its

public sector: "It is a classical and traditional situation in the public offices of *la bella Italia*. The dear officials are often <u>temporarily</u> absent from their jobs and nobody knows why and where they are. This could be a conversation concerning the job but if this is Italy it is surely a personal chat..." (5I/F27).

A somewhat similar drift could be found in many Swedish responses – that is, the airport incident as a sign of something much more general – but it has to do not so much with the crisis of civilization as a paradigm shift (of course it is easy to argue that they are one and the same). According to this interpretation, the "service culture" is missing in Sweden. This has nothing to do with respect or lack of it, but with the previously industrial society, where "services" were relegated to the traditional past, when poor people served the rich. The new, modern Sweden, which was born in the 1930s, eschewed the need of services, especially at home, sending everybody to an equal employment in industry. The economic shift of the 1980s created a need of the "service culture" which clashed with the "national culture's" freshly developed preferences.

Appropriation vs. disavowal

An interesting trait of the responses has to do with an attempt to localize the described event. Roughly, two differences can be discerned: "this must be happening in my country" and "this must be happening elsewhere".

The episode which is most often appropriated is the airport episode. It is especially often the Italians and the Swedes who say: this of course happens in Italy! or this must be Sweden! The further interpretation follows, however, two different lines, as illustrated above.

The group that most frequent disavows (almost all) episodes is the Polish respondents. Partly, it has to do with still scarce presence of foreigners in Poland, and quite massive emigration from Poland in the last 50 years or so. It is unlikely that episodes like 4 happen in Poland. But there is more to it, we think.

One typical way of disavowal relates to the label "culture clash" where this clash is specified as a clash of a "modern" culture with a "traditional" one, the candidates being: Greece, former Yugoslavia, Japan, India, but in the first place "Arab countries" or "Muslim countries". The present authors have no direct experience of these cultures and have no comment on how their

reality looks like. From the interpretations these appear to be countries where "there is no respect for women", where "women are treated instrumentally", where they are supposed not to show unveiled in public places and serve men in silence. The traditional culture is supposed to be completely fixed, and its representatives unable of adaptive behavior. In other words, they must follow their traditional culture, and even if they try not to (e.g. they invite a woman researcher to a research institute and then to lunch), the situation conflicts so much with their religious feelings, that they feel deeply uneasy. One would say, almost as uneasy as the Europeans seeing women standing, but this is wrong, of course: gallantry makes part of a modern culture. This contrast was mentioned so often that we shall come back to that issue in our final section.

The contrast traditional-modern (and the following disavowal or appropriation) was sometimes couched in terms of generation or class differences: such answers were to be found among interpretations of young Swedish students, who would speak of contrast with older generations, or the values of *petit bourgeoisie*, and then ask forgiveness for their "prejudice", thus emphasizing that they realize the reification of which they are guilty. Such apologies were never formulated in relations to "the other culture".

Gender discrimination and segregation

At the outset of the study, we expected that gender discrimination will be the least frequent label/explanation given in the interpretations of the episodes. We were both right and wrong. Almost all interpretations take up the possibility of gender discrimination, but many of them in order to refuse it: this is not, or *cannot be* gender discrimination.

The reasons for refusal are as follows: the developed countries achieved a full equality long ago; the same would have happened to a man; and, it is not a discrimination because the women are doing it. The two first are well-known anti-discrimination arguments, with the usual corroboration which was not relevant in this case: if one (or some) woman are not discriminated against, it proves that there is no discrimination. The last one, however, is a very interesting argument, as it in a sense "nobilitates" discrimination. Discrimination, as its Latin name indicates, is a serious business and can be done by men only. Women

mistreating women are "envious, jealous, bitchy", but not discriminatory.

The Puerto Rican group, on the other hand, identified gender discrimination in all episodes. Yet, they often addressed the issue as happening in "another country", one that has not achieved full equality. A kind of opposite move is a "trivialization" of discrimination, common in Italian and Scandinavian readings. It classifies episodes as "the good old discrimination story", a thing of the past.

Discrimination as part of culture is, as we said before, typical of "traditional cultures". Rarely it is recognized as an institutionalized view on women (as unimportant and inferior) and identified as part of "our" culture. This seems to have to do with the way of contrasting the "two cultures": "traditional" cultures do not have institutions, only rituals. "We" have institutions *and* rituals.

Not a single reading from the USA addressed the possibility of gender discrimination. In fact, this was probably the most silent group about any kind of reference toward gender.[6] This is particularly surprising due to the national, ethic and racial composition of the group, which included 3 Chinese students and one student from each of the following countries: Bulgaria, France, Greece, India, Latvia, Russia, Taiwan, Thailand, the UK and Venezuela. All other students in this group were nationals of the USA, but represented several ethnic/racial groups. Given their diversity, the homogeneity of their responses might indicate a particular "text of identity": how to be "an American MBA". One might also be guessing that this group, because of its cultural heterogeneity, was deprived of the "another country" device, which served the culturally homogenous groups so well in dealing with a suspicion of gender discrimination.

Empathy, sympathy, hostility

The attitude toward the protagonist differed from a deep empathy, often indicated by putting the interpreter in her place, through a declared sympathy, through a feeling of strangeness ("I am not a woman of 35–45! These episodes are abstract to me", 17PL/M25; *"I am a man"*, 5PL/M40) to an open hostility. It was, naturally, more often women who were emphatic and more of-

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6   Due to time limitations, this group was only given
     episodes 2 and 3.

ten young men who felt indifferent or uncon-
cerned. The attitude of an open hostility, met only
in responses of some young men, needs some
commenting upon. Before we come to that, there
is one aspect in all episodes which sometimes
produced not so much hostility as irritation. As
pointed in appropriate language by one of the
sociologist, the woman always 'enjoys an elevat-
ed social position'. The episodes do not portray
events from the life of homeless, single mothers
or poor people: they portray a woman at the peak
of her career who suffers (or imagines to suffer)
a minor inconvenience (with the exception of
Episode 4). Unwittingly, we presented what to
some readers amounted to jet-set-like stories, of
international travels and airports, of parties and
'fine people'. It sometimes provoked, especially
in two Polish groups of younger students,[7] if not
straightforward resentment, then a kind of irrita-
tion which, actually, the western feminism often
produces in countries besieged by "more serious"
problems: "If these are the only problems they
have..."

But open hostility appeared in another context.
It was always connected to the labeling of the
situation as sexual-erotic one, but where in some
interpretations (always written by men) there were
some hostile hints, two of them chose a conse-
quent language of sexual abuse. There are no
differences between episodes, and although the
translation does not fully render the viciousness
of slang expression used, we quote them verba-
tim to show what we mean:

> Episode 1: In order to attract attention the research-
> er strips naked and climbs the table. After her per-
> formance the restaurant manager offers her a con-
> tract, and as the salary is much higher than at the
> University at home, she stays permanently abroad.
> Episode 2: As he openly ignored her the business-
> woman kicked his balls blue.
> Episode 3: The professor suggested that everybody
> moves to her hotel room and has a party. During
> the party several regretful events happened, like one
> of the guests threw up on the professor's bosom
> which was generally disapproved of.
> Episode 4: Turns out that this corporation was ac-
> tually a public house where the engineer worked
> hard and with commitment. After 5 more years she
> came back home in a Mercedes. (11PL/M25)
>
> Episode 1: Probably the cow did not know the lan-
> guage and produced some idiocy towards the other

foreigner. He being highly cultured said nothing, and
now everybody looks at them as at heavy idiots.
> Episode 2: Plain normalcy, the guy had a problem
> and asked, the employee does not explain as what
> is there to explain? A job is a job. And the museum
> piece with 40 on her shoulder should stop being
> surprised that nobody sees her, the great business-
> woman, ugly and wrinkled.
> Episode 3: The bloody gastarbeiter should be hap-
> py that nobody wants to chat to her so that she can
> concentrate on drinks.
> Episode 4: Perhaps her innovations weren't that
> innovative and besides if all around her were only
> guys why is the stupid cow so surprised? (6PL/M24)

In combination with other answers, there ap-
pears a peculiar code where letting women stand
is a serious misdemeanor, whereas abusing them
verbally seems to be accepted. Indeed, other
experiences in field research in organizations in
Poland indicate that sexually abusive language
might be the main way of disciplining women in
public situations (see also Konecki, 1990, al-
though he does not use this interpretation). Al-
though there is no doubt that there is as much
sexism (regardless of sex) in other countries as
there is in Poland, it is hardly acceptable, for a
student of a university to express such views,
even under the cover of anonymity.[8] Interesting-
ly enough, in the present study, this kind of abu-
sive language, although not always as explicit as
in the two examples above, was to be found only
in responses of some of the younger men (20–
25).

READING THE READINGS

What was it about?

The interpretations either saw episodes as
examples of discrimination, or not. If not, the two
most typical explanations were the protagonist's
defects, or else failings in her environment
(breach of civility, lack of service culture). The
most puzzling, however, were the readings adopt-
ing a discriminatory interpretation. With the no-
table exception of the multicultural US group, they
insisted on locating episodes in "another coun-
try".

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[7] The reason that Polish and Puerto Rican students
are younger than their colleagues in other coun-
tries is that in those countries still prevails a rela-
tively straight educational path: from high school
to university.

[8] The notion of public education, a public debate in
lieu of private abuse, so cherished in other spheres,
does not apply to gender discrimination in Poland.
The Polish leading (and perhaps only) feminist, Ms.
Labuda, faced in 1994 an exclusion from her party
"for representing one issue only". It was the fate of
a half of the population which was summarized as
"one issue only".

The episodes themselves might have invited this reading. "All episodes seem to be presenting . . . her as separated and disembedded from her ambiance; the episode takes place 'elsewhere', in another, 'strange' different world" (7I/ F25). Indeed there is a possibility of reading it metaphorically, in the spirit of Emily Dickinson's "All we are strangers –dear–" (Loeffelholz, 1991, p.152). But the most common reading separated "the strangers" (which sometimes included and sometimes excluded the protagonist) from "us" (the locals).

"Culture" became the centerpiece of the explanatory arguments: there are ways of treating women which are possible in some cultural contexts and not in others; and, culture itself is the material for identity building ("I am a foreigner and in my country we do things my way.."). The "culture" was usually the alien culture in which the protagonist was a guest. In such cases, the protagonist was culture-free, able to choose her actions strategically, whereas the "others" were imprisoned in their (traditional) culture patterns.

Sometimes two "cultures" were put to stand facing one another: "our" (Polish, Finnish, Swedish, Italian) and "other". More interesting, if the "other" culture had a name, it was often "the Arab culture". This "other" culture was characterized by a few fixed traits: lack of respect for women, and generally, lack of civility. Unlike the members of "our" culture, "the others" could not act in a differentiated way; their culture prescribed their actions, and even when trying to act against its imperatives (e.g. inviting a woman researcher in Episode 1), they were unconsciously pushed back into their cultural patterns and behaved accordingly.

We do admit that our knowledge of "Arab cultures" is nil, but it is very unlikely that most people who mentioned "Arab cultures" had significant contact with any Arab country. Even less likely is that "other" cultures would differ so dramatically from "ours" when we set comparisons on a more general level, apart from specific customs. Yet, perhaps even more important was that the readers emphasized that those "other" cultures were so fixed, so homogeneous, and so poor in variation. There was very little agreement on how is it in "our" countries, but there was a monolithic perception of "the Other".

It felt tragicomic to read, again and again, that there are "some countries where there is no equality between men and women" or "where women are not as respected as men". "Nowadays, in most of the developed countries women are equal to men as coworkers, thus these situations are somewhat abstract" (6PL/M32). But again, it is not the view on gender which is so striking in this context, but the purpose that culture, or rather "cultures," seem to serve. One has a feeling that the contemporary rhetoric of "cross-cultural approaches", "cultural differences" and "cultural shock" have allowed for a new way of demonizing "the other", by reifying "the other culture", simplifying and fixing it which, at the same time, permits one's culture (i.e., "advanced and civilized") to deny the occurrence of "barbaric acts" such as gender discrimination.

Each of the interpretations pointed out at a variety of possible actions and reactions of the protagonist, at possibilities of acting against culture or along it, breaking the rules, bending them or inventing new ones, but once the term "culture" appeared, the picture stabilized, became a still life. True, the concept usually denotes stability and repetition of human action limited to a time and space, but it is not the historical or the geopolitical use which seems to dominate: it is the need to differentiate between "us" and "them" in order to acquire any sort of (gendered, racialized) identity.

At the time of the Iraq conflict, it has been pointed out, a new black-and-white division of the world was being forged, with the "Russians" emptying the place of the villain (which historically belonged before to the "Yellow Peril") for the "Arabs" to take. It seems that this Manichean division is now effective (see e.g. Said, 1978; 1983; Gellner, 1993). Although some other "traditional cultures" were mentioned in passim (Greece and Bulgaria), that was somewhat different as the interpreters claimed actually a first-hand experience. But the "Arabs" remain a black-boxed threat, not only in our study, in spite of the fact that Muslim women activists and writers have pointed out repeatedly that the "western" definition of their problems, real enough, is far from acceptable to them (e.g., Accad, 1991; Tohidi, 1991).

Chandra Mohanty takes up this theme in her readings of western feminism addressing the "third world women's problems". She shows a pervasive assumption of an "almost identical vision of women" that all Arab and Muslim societies are supposed to have (1989, p.61) This assumption is problematic both because it invents a homogeneous "Arab and Muslim society" (which is supposed to cover over twenty different countries), and because it invents the passive, oppressed and static group of "Arab and

Muslim women". "Arabs and Muslims, it appears, don't change at all. Their patriarchal family is carried over from the times of the prophet Mohammed. They exist, as it were, outside history" (Mohanty, 1989, pp.61–62).

That the "western time" runs ahead while "the Other's time" stands still has been observed before by critically minded anthropologists (Fabian, 1983). But a critique of feminism or anthropology touches but a top of an iceberg. What should be studied more are the everyday interpretations like those taken up here, which perpetuate the "normalcy" of certain readings and expurgate other. Expelling gender discrimination to "other countries" might be a pervasive practice which helps western societies to immunize themselves from dealing with one of their persistent injustices.

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