

Anna Lundstedt: *White Governmentality. "Immigrant Women" and Textile Handicrafts – a Discourse Analysis*. The National Institute for Working Life, Work Life in Transition 2005:14 ISBN 91-7045-766-2, ISSN 1404-8426, 328 pages. Written in Swedish, with an English summary. Ph.D. diss. at the University of Göteborg, Department of Ethnology, Sweden, 2005.

Abstract

The aim of this dissertation is to analyse and deconstruct both the discourses, and also the subject positions which have been articulated and performed in texts, statements and actions that were produced in relation to the textile projects which were set up in the 1990s in Sweden, oriented towards "immigrant women" as a target group.

By analysing what subject positions the initiators of the textile projects have been ascribed, identify themselves with and position themselves in relation to, I want to study how "White womanhood" is constructed.

In earlier research on migration, "immigrants" and ethnocentrism in Sweden, the focus has been on theories of nationalism, racism and racialization, as well as structural discrimination. By introducing Ghassan Hage's theory of White governmentality, the aim is instead to analyse the educational programmes and labour market measures from a new perspective - one that emphasizes Whiteness. In this way, I want to put Sweden both into an international context and into the history of colonialism and Whiteness. My starting point is to view Whiteness as a historical construction of norms, codes, preferences and physical presence. Whiteness can be accumulated, although only to a certain extent. No single individual can achieve complete Whiteness since it is a fantasy. The study also proceeds from Judith Butler's theoretical concepts of genealogy and performativity as well as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's discourse theory. The methods are interviews and participant observations. The categories of material that this study is based on are the following: recorded and transcribed interviews, field notes from participant observations and study visits, written documents, material from the media, fashion catalogues as well as scholarly literature.

The dissertation elucidates how this type of textile project with philanthropic features and therapeutic orientations emerging in the 1990s is not a new phenomenon, in Sweden or internationally. The textile projects are to be viewed as an arena in which the discourse on White multiculturalism and the discourse on White heteronormativity are materialized. Colonial thought structures, conceptions, and stereotypes of the Other are expressed in the choice of target group, orientation of activity and methods. The discourses supply and ascribe individuals different subject positions which enables the exercise of White governmentality. The dissertation demonstrates how Whiteness, "Swedishness" and "immigrantship" are reserved for specific locations and rooms. In order to perform "White womanhood", contrasting pictures are necessary for its outer boundaries to be made clear. The subject position of "immigrant woman" is of great importance for the construction of "White womanhood". In the discourse, she is described both as a victim and a heroine. The study shows that categories such as "immigrant woman" can be problematised and renegotiated. Textile handicrafts has been a means both to construct and foster "White womanhood" as well as a concrete way to consolidate the adoption of "Whiteness" among those individuals who are ascribed the subject position of "immigrant woman".

Keywords: White governmentality, "White womanhood", post-colonial feminism, "immigrant women", Whiteness, heteronormativity, multiculturalism, textile handicrafts, discourse, intersectionality, ethnocentrism, integration, labour market, education.