14 ETHNIC IDENTITY, NATIONALISM, AND GENDER

Read: de la Cadena, Marisol, 1995, “Women are more Indian”: Ethnicity and gender in a community near Cuzco.

I. Introduction

A. We have noted in class several times that class /ethnicity /race /nation /gender /sexuality intersect, are “imbricated”

B. Nationality is gendered

C. Ethnicity is gendered

1. de la Cadena’s case in Peru: “individuals construct or contest their ascribed ethnicity within specific social contexts of power and domination based on class and gender inequalities” (p. 331)

2. Recall the reading by Schein

3. Discuss: examples of gendered nation, gendered ethnicity you can think of?

II. Gendered at two levels: on-the-ground situations, and symbolically

A. “On-the-ground” refers to how people actually live; their options, constraints, their material reality

1. Example: reproduction

   a. Sterilize gypsy women in Slovenia

   b. The wrong nationality/ ethnic group

   c. Or women can be of the wrong race

      1) “Mississippi appendectomies” were in fact sterilizations

2. And the opposite: attempts to increase births of members of the “right” nationality/ ethnic group/ race
a. Piece by Heng and Devan we’ll read for next session on Singapore pro-natalist state policies for Chinese women, not Malays or South Asians

b. Romania under Ceausescu, the last socialist dictator

1) Wanted to increase birth rate

2) Contraception and abortion were basically not available

   a) Like all E. European socialist countries, both women and men expected to hold full-time jobs; state services to help families with infants and small children inadequate

3) Consequently many infants were left as foundlings to be raised in state orphanages

4) Horrible conditions; worse was their being given transfusions of HIV-infected blood to “strengthen” them

c. Israel (handouts)

d. Greece

1) Highest abortion rate in Europe (Russia’s higher)

   a) Unlike Romania, contraception and abortion readily available

2) Studied by several scholars

3) Decision-making by both men and women complicated by state policies and propaganda regarding the need to increase the number of Greeks

   a) Perceive Turkey to be a threat

   b) And Slavs to the north: the highly conflictive issue of Macedonia as Greek province and as a country

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e. Policy in USSR

1) Officials had been quite concerned that in the near future ethnic Russians would be a minority

3. Note that states always have a stake in demographics

a. For example, Japan is worried about too-high proportion of older people

1) Not enough workers

2) Not enough stay-at-home wives to take care of increasing numbers of elderly family members

b. China’s one-child policy: concern with too many people, period

4. But in this class we’re concerned with a specific kind of state policy regarding demographics

a. How to produce more of the “right stuff” and less of the “wrong stuff” in terms of specific categories of people

1) With respect to nationality, ethnicity, race

2) We aren’t looking at attempts to limit reproduction by “the wrong” social class

a) But it happens

b) In the U.S. thousands of people were sterilized up to the 1970s basically because they were poor and deemed “unfit”

c) Heng and Devan show that ethnicity in Singapore is classed

d) But clearly Singapore’s policy is mostly intended to result in more ethnic Chinese, not increase numbers of upper and middle class members

B. Second kind of gendering: symbolically

1. What de la Cadena terms peoples’ “mental reality”
2. As in other cases, the ideology says there’s a fixed bipolar system that assigns people to one and only one category.
   a. But there’s also a “fluid, protean, and contingent process by which people attach ethnic labels to themselves or others” (p. 331)
   b. That benefits men

3. What is the material reality of Chitapampa?

4. Peru went through a land reform—redistribution of land
   a. Such that the original distinction of “whites” having land, “indios” not, no longer applied
   b. But the classification remained
      1) Evolved into a cultural one—a set of symbols
         a) Discuss: what is a symbol?
      2) Dress, language, certain skills
      3) Racism does exist in Peru
         a) In the sense of colorism,
         b) But most people are mestizos
   c. de la Cadena speaks of “cultural mestizaje”
      1) And documents how women are indeed “more Indian”—in several negative senses
   d. What cultural—ideological, symbolic—processes keep women in that inferior position?
      1) Familiar notions about inferiority—women linked to children
      2) “Weak”
      3) Seen to not really “work”
      4) Idea that if they were to try, they’d do it poorly, fall ill, damage their reproductive system
5) If they went to the city, they’d be subject to sexual predation and assault

6) Less likely to be “in process” of losing their indigenous identity

7) So, not only are they “more Indian”
   a) More of them are, in fact, Indian

C. In other systems women are also supposed to maintain the ethnic difference

1. But the gender inequality is less apparent, more easily argued away

2. Guatemala: indigenous women will wear traditional dress, even in the U.S.
   a. Are far more likely to be monolingual
   b. Celebrated as “Maya mothers,” etc.
   c. Nelson piece difficult to read in places, but does comprehensively address this issue

3. In the U.S. and Canada: lots of debates within activist communities about the proper role of women
   a. Should they organize demonstrations, write leaflets, sign petitions, etc., just like the men?
   b. Or should they represent the “traditional” culture
   c. During black protests in the U.S. in the 1960s and 1970s
   d. One leader, Stokley Carmichael, said the proper position of women in the movement is supine
      1) Lying on their backs
      Another leader, Eldridge Cleaver, said women’s proper role in the Black movement was to be a good wife and mother and raise a new generation of warriors who’ll continue the fight
   e. Elicited a great deal of discussion
f. Continues in the Native American movement: women as bearers of culture

D. Another example: Mexico

1. The very powerful symbol of “la Malinche”:
   a. A “national allegory” of Mexico involving race, ethnicity, conquest, gender, and sexuality?
   b. La Malinche was *conquistador* Cortez’ translator and concubine
   c. She is seen to personify the cultural connection between the act of sexual intercourse (*chingar*) and conquest, violation
   d. She is also seen to represent the devaluation of women by men who are shamed for being mestizos—sons of Spanish fathers and socially denigrated Indian mothers
   e. And to have betrayed her people

2. Present-day gendered Mexican/Chicana identity

3. According to Patricia Zavella, it is heterosexual (she’s a lesbian)
   a. She says that ideology requires women to submit to repression of their sexuality
   b. Embedded in Catholic-based discourse, institutions, and everyday practices

4. The ideology justifies this with the mythologized actions of one of their sex

5. She says that male dominance and the double standard are rationalized in the cultural polemics of *machismo/chingón* and virgin/whore.
   a. Ideology of *machismo*: men are jealous, unfaithful, possessive
   b. Theme of conquest—deflowering virgins, etc.
   c. With women needing to continually prove their purity, for they all bear the mark of that original betrayal

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6. Do you see how her argument links the ideology—the symbolic level—with on-the-ground gendered relations?
   a. Providing justifications for the power asymmetries?

F. The very frequent theme of “sleeping with the enemy” is gendered and sexed
   1. It’s always women: collaborators, sluts, traitors
   2. Frantz Fanon’s book *The Wretched of the Earth*\(^4\)
      a. Assigns a vastly different role to Algerian women in the struggle against French colonialism
      b. Women should remain veiled: a sign of resistance to the oppressor who wants to unveil them
         1) A rape theme
         2) Rape symbolizes violation, conquest
         3) But what if the woman accepts?
            a) Ideology says she’s a traitor in a way a man cannot betray

III. We will read about Southeast Asia for next session
   A. Stoler’s piece: colonial policies in Dutch East Indies
      1. Policies that have to do with gender, sexuality and nationality in the context of colonialism
         a. And that shift over a period of 40 years
   B. And Heng and Devan