



BODY AND PERSON: GOVERNING EXCHANGE IN 21st CENTURY BIOMEDICINE

Seminar June 9th at 1pm Room 35.0.13 at CSS

Øster Farimagsgade 5, 1014 København K

With guest speakers Dr. Jacob Copeman, Tine Gammeltoft, Ayo Wahlberg



PROGRAMME:

13.00: WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION TO THE SEMINAR:
Professor Klaus Høyer

13.15-14.00: "Anti-sacrifice: 'small fractions of excess' and the philanthropic share"
Dr. Jacob Copeman, University of Edinburgh

Break: (coffee and cake)

14.15-15.00: "Undoing the damage done by war: Selective reproduction and struggles for personhood in Vietnam"
Professor Tine Gammeltoft, Department of Anthropology, KU

15.00-15.45: "Enlisting Reproductive Bodies in China"
Associate Professor Ayo Wahlberg, Department of Anthropology, KU

Break: (coffee and cake)

16.00-17.00: "Body and Person: Governing Exchange in 21st Century Biomedicine"
Klaus Høyer, Sebastian Mohr, Zainab Sheikh, Anja Marie Bornø Jensen,
Maria Olejaz, Francisca Nordfalk.

17.00-17.30: PANEL DISCUSSION:
(Comments from Dr. Copeman, Prof Gammeltoft and Prof Wahlberg)

17.30: THE SEMINAR ENDS

Abstract Dr Copeman: "Anti-sacrifice: 'small fractions of excess' and the philanthropic share"

Drawing on ethnographic research in Delhi and Kolkata on educational campaigns concerning blood donation and transfusion, this paper explores how voluntary blood donor organisations seek to educate schoolchildren and others about the quantities of blood that can be safely donated. The key point they seek to convey is that the body produces more blood than it needs, and that this portion of excess blood can thus be given without the body losing anything. This is an insight at odds with conventional understandings of blood donation in the region as involving non-recuperable loss, an understanding that informs perceptions of blood donation as a sacrificial gesture. Drawing on Bataille's notion of 'excess' energy in *The Accursed Share* (1991), the paper shows how for such campaigners the body comes to be perceived as made for giving – the body contains a philanthropic share of blood. The paper also examines attempts to foster 'rational usage' of blood by doctors; i.e. to deter over-prescription of donated blood. 'Rational usage' itself attains a kind of philanthropic status because it conserves this precious substance for others who need it. Doctors in India are frequently accused of over-prescribing blood as if it were a kind of tonic in abundant supply. Challenging any easy distinction between the technical sphere and the emotional sphere, what campaigners seek is cautious usage of the substance as a tribute to the sentiments that gave rise to the gift. As one campaigner puts it: 'People are not donating a commodity but their love so we must respect this and use it properly'.

Abstract Professor Gammeltoft: “Undoing the damage done by war: Selective reproduction and struggles for personhood in Vietnam”

In this paper I explore the social, cultural, and political connotations held by "defective" infant bodies in contemporary Vietnam. Drawing on long-term ethnographic research on the use of ultrasound scanning for prenatal screening, I investigate the personal and familial crises that arise when a child is born anomalous, discussing why most couples opt immediately for an abortion if an ultrasound scan detects a fetal anomaly. Infant "defectiveness", I show, compromises personhood in significant ways. Selective reproduction - in this case the use of prenatal screening in combination with induced abortion - is therefore seen by both population policy-makers and prospective parents as a necessary element in parents' struggles for personhood; their own and their children's. This approach to prenatal screening must, I argue, be seen in a particular historical context, namely in light of U.S. spraying of the highly toxic herbicide dioxin "Agent Orange" over Vietnam during the Second Indochina War.

Abstract Professor Wahlberg: “Enlisting reproductive bodies in China”

In the past decade or so, sperm banking has come to be a fully routinized component of China's extensive and restrictive reproductive complex. The largest sperm banks screen some 3,000 potential donors every year, not least because of a state-mandated restriction of five offspring per donor. In this paper, I use the process of sperm donation in China as a way to think about reproductive bodies in China today. By examining how potential donors are recruited on university campuses and then screened at the sperm bank, I will argue that sperm banks have emerged as sanctuaries of vitality as Chinese male bodies are seen to be under threat from an onslaught of pollution, occupational hazards, modern lifestyles and electronic radiation. By assuring the quality of the sperm they provide infertile couples, Chinese sperm banks also contribute to national goals of improving population quality. The very vitality of the nation is at stake in the ongoing scaling up of reproductive technologies in urban China.

Abstract: “Body and Person: Governing Exchange in 21st Century Biomedicine”

Since 2011, the research group “Body and Person” has investigated how bodies, body parts and tissue are exchanged, perceived and governed in Denmark. Based on ethnographic studies of the policy landscape and the practices of blood donation, anatomical dissection, organ transplantation, and sperm donation, and based on a recent collaborative public survey on organ donation attitudes in Denmark, the researchers will present their results and discuss the wondrous relationship between body and person in contemporary Danish biomedicine. Among others, the lecture will address notions of dignity and usability, the professional challenges and ethical dilemmas in handling bodily exchanges, donor and recipient experiences, the negotiations of public legitimacy, and the social meaning of bodies and body parts.

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The Body and Person Research Group consist of: Professor Klaus Høyer (PI) Assistant Professors Anja Marie Bornø Jensen and Sebastian Mohr, PhD Scholar Maria Olejaz, Master students Zainab Sheikh, Ida Deleuran and Francisca Nordfalk