

Racial and Gendered Facets of Orientalism at stake in Integration Programmes: Case Studies of two Sex Education Projects for Newly Arrived Immigrants in Stockholm and Berlin

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Abstract: In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks and the so-called *refugee crisis* in the summer 2015 in Europe, orientalist tropes around the figure of the *Muslim migrants* resurfaced according to which Muslim men and women derail from the European norms and values: the supposed general consensus around gender equality, female emancipation, sexual consent and LGBTQIA+ friendliness. In the midst of debates and angst around the *integration* of the refugees, some initiatives appeared in Western Europe offering education programmes on gender and sexuality to newly arrived immigrants. In this article, I will focus on the studies of two of those projects, one in Stockholm and one in Berlin, and attempt to deconstruct their racial and gendered dimensions in three steps. I, first, seek to unveil the *othering* process of the participants of the courses observed empirically. I, then, add a gendered reading of orientalism and the *nation* to have more perspective on such an *othering* process. Finally, I argue that it demonstrates a paradox with the liberal projection of the countries of Germany and Sweden.

Introduction

The discussion I wish to engage in this article is threefold. First, it revolves around the perception and stigmatization of immigrants of Muslim origin, real or perceived, who arrive and settle in Western Europe, as incompatible with European norms of women's rights. The article then explores how this representation is rooted in European Orientalist and, therefore, colonial history, which vilifies Muslim masculinity. Finally, it questions the extent to which this stigma informs the apprehension of immigrant integration. I argue that, in Western Europe, the figure of the Muslim man illustrates the current ultimate Other and is depicted as a brutal patriarch who doesn't have respect for women. This pejorative representation is inevitably linked, by a mirror effect, to the self-identification of Europe as *modern* and *developed*, of which the respect and promotion of women's rights have become a criterion.

I chose the term 'immigrant' which I find most suitable for this research because it speaks from the perspective of the country of arrival and includes all migration incentives (including asylum seeking). My interest indeed revolves around the way immigrants are perceived by local inhabitants in the arrival countries in Western Europe and overlooks their migration patterns and stories, as they are not the subjects per se.

As case studies, I have set my focus on two sex education projects: “Together for Respect and Security” (TRS) and “Snacka Jämmt” (“let’s talk equally”), respectively in Berlin and in Stockholm. Those projects were specifically designed for newly arrived immigrants, as part of their *integration* in a new society and with the purpose of engaging in a conversation around the local norms and values on identity, gender equality, relationships and sexuality.

Both projects are entrenched in the Swedish and the German contexts that have their own particularities. Sweden, for example, often presents gender equality as an important part of its national identity and, thus, shows itself as a feminist champion (Sager and Mulinari 2018) while Germany has been marked by the Cologne events during New Year’s Eve 2015-2016 when racialised men have been accused of sexually assaulting women. Nevertheless, the two have also great similarities and speak for Western Europe. The project TRS in Berlin was, for example, originally designed in Norway and then expanded to Germany with the same curriculum.

This article will explore, first, the different sites according to which the participants are *othered*, i.e. opposed to the self-representation being German and Swedish. I will, then, add the intersection between race, gender and nation to unwrap the orientalist imaginary at stake in the projects. Finally, I will offer a critical analysis of integration theories and highlight the paradoxes pertaining to the researched sex education projects.

Methodology

This article stems from qualitative research combining interviews with educators and project managers working for the two projects in Stockholm and Berlin and the ethnography of sessions from both projects in English and in Swedish and German through translation. The interviews and the ethnography were conducted in the course of the years 2018-2019. No interviews with the participants of the courses were conducted for ethical reasons. The methodology also included the analysis of written and video documents: curriculum of the classes and PowerPoint that contains images and videos as well as policy documents on multicultural communication and immigrant integration and websites.

Orientalist construction of the *West* and the *Orient*

The opposition between the *Self* and the *Other*, according to Jacques Derrida, is inscribed in Western metaphysics ruled by a binary structure with concepts or terms organised in hierarchical oppositions (Derrida in Yeğenoğlu 1998). “There can be no third term in a binary structure, and no mediation between the two terms. One of them is given a logical priority and a positive value, while the Other is characterised as the absence of the positive attributes of the first. The second term is thus denied an existence of its own; it is merely a negation of the first term” (Yeğenoğlu 1998, 7).

Edward Said deploys the notion of the Other in order to deconstruct the dynamic at play in Orientalism, which he roughly dates back to the late 18th century. He defines it as the Western enterprise creating the category of the *Orient* as its privileged Other, its ultimate counterpart in opposition to which the *West* has defined itself. Although the two perceived entities are mutually constituted, he reminds that the Orient is generalised, essentialised and taken as a separate

and homogeneous block whose borders are not clearly defined. It is perceived as an exotic and mysterious place lying outside of history and deprived of any inner geographical and historical particularities.

Three sources of *othering* observed

The main sites of *othering* identified in the research are, first, the state and legislative body, second, the articulation of individual agency, and third, the openness and approach regarding sexuality. To begin with, the interviewees have recurrently distinguished themselves and Germany and Sweden from the participants and “their home countries” based on the importance and organisation of the state and the law. “Their countries” are presented as structured around religion and in a non-democratic way. The project TRS in Berlin, for instance, intends to extend the course to religious freedom and freedom of speech because the participants “experience different situations in their home countries or their families.” In contrast, in Sweden “We don’t have laws based on religion. We talk about the democratic system also and how laws are formed, like in many democratic countries, they are formed after how people live their lives and they change through time. In contrast to non-democratic countries.”

Moreover, a strong distinction is made in legal terms, primarily around gay rights and the ban of marital rape. “We talk about sex and the body and different sexual rights and also what’s important to think about when you have sex, talk about the law because we have I think one the most strict laws.” It is also worth to mention the recurrent reference to institutions such as the school, the police and to the presence of the State in Sweden and Germany that are portrayed as ready to help the immigrants whenever needed - “here you are protected by the government” - which is contrasted with the assumed presence of the family that dictates the rules of the participants’ life.

The second source of *othering* that emerges from the research revolves around the idea of agency and freedom. In both projects, the objectives are explained as giving the participants the opportunity for “norms criticism.” This process entails learning about “culture,” becoming aware of one’s own norms and values, questioning them, and deciding for oneself whether to abide by them or not. The project Snacka Jämmt has an entire session on “culture and norms” whose purpose is to “show how norms and cultural behaviours are created and changed both from a social perspective and on an individual level” and to “encourage norm-critical thinking.” The underlying idea of norm criticism is, here, to show that once aware of such “norms” one can change them. Unanimously, the interviewees believe that the participants do not question their own cultural traits and ways of thinking and are, therefore, less tolerant with different views. One of them said that “opinions are always different, this is actually what we want to teach people. If I have an opinion about what a friend or love is for me, other people don’t have to share my opinion. This is actually a thing that many people from our refugees don’t know yet.”

On top of the assumed close-mindedness and lack of self-awareness, the participants are perceived as alienated by their environment and filled with “traditional norms.” “I think it’s more set, traditionally set where they come from. Perhaps a lot of them [...] they’ve never questioned it because you are not encouraged to question it. I don’t think they’ve thought much about it, this is how the world functions and they come here and okay it can be in different ways.” This depiction is strongly contrasted with the liberal self-image shown by the interviewees and in the

overall research material: “we are so liberated in Sweden and more and more in Europe. . .” “you have the right to define yourself;” “you can marry when you like and whomever you like, you can live your sexual identity.” Similarly, the TRS website states that “it is difficult for many refugees and immigrants to understand the freedom of behaviour in Norway.”

The last pillar of *othering* is the approach to sexuality. The participants are perceived as having a toxic attitude to sexuality. They allegedly do not acknowledge sexual abuse, especially in marriage. As one interviewee stated: “It should be out of free will, even if you are married, the idea that if you don’t like to have sex and you are forced to it then it’s like a rape. It’s not very common in their culture.” Another recurrent topic in interviews and course curriculum pertains to homosexuality. One project leader in Stockholm told me after the interview that the participants are very intolerant regarding homosexuality and that it stems from Islam. Similarly, a TRS course leader recounts “a young guy” who said that “actually when homosexuals are together, this is not freedom for me, they shouldn’t have the right to be together.” Moreover, apparently “there are misconceptions about the hymen, for example, virginity, masturbation, they are told that this is dangerous. So there are some that we know are misconceptions that we don’t get as much with Swedish kids.” Sexuality is also a topic that the participants purportedly do not talk about and know very little about, “a topic that is widely denied or unknown in their home country, sexuality, sexual harassment, sexual self-determination or sexual sovereignty are things in the country where they are from that are not so widely open talked about”.

On the contrary, Sweden and Germany are supposed to have a mandatory sex education programme at school, giving all young people access to information. It is very much accentuated that sexuality is no taboo in Sweden and Germany.

Implied Western superiority

It is worth noticing that the topics according to which the participants are *othered* resonate with the identification of the *Modern Subject* as developed during the Enlightenment period of the 18th century in Western Europe: rational, secular, autonomous. The *Modern Subject*, thought as universal, is however constructed in the repression of its *Other*. “The subject is produced by a linguistic/discursive strategy in which the denial of dependence on the other guarantees an illusion of autonomy and freedom” (Yeğenoğlu 1998, 6).

Most of the interviewees subtly imply that the Swedish and German ways are ahead on the development ladder. One admits this idea when explaining the reasons for the project Snacka Jämt: “I think it’s also right to make some demands, you should protect your democracy and we have developed this far until gender equality and that’s something we should protect and take care of if we don’t want to go backward in time instead of forward”. The project’s curriculum also includes a short history of the main laws passed in Sweden in the past two centuries:

“1809 - The power is moved from the king to the Riksdag 1876 - Sweden gets its first prime minister 1944 - Homosexuality becomes legal 1952 - Sweden gets freedom of religion 1975 - The King no longer has any political power 1977 - The sequel (the one who becomes king or queen) is the first-born child even though it is a girl. 1979 - It is no longer allowed to beat children 2000 - Swedish Church is completely separated from the State”

This list aims to show that the country’s culture and laws have evolved over time, once again mentioning the country’s democratic system, secularism and liberalism (gender equality and free-

dom of religion). It is not clearly stated but the developmentalist logic seems obvious, implying that the country has reached a higher state over the centuries that the participants could also abide by. If I can extend the use of orientalism as a conceptual tool to understand our topic, Said explains it as reducing the *Orient* to qualities deemed inferior to those of the *West*: the *Oriental Subject* is conceived as irrational, uncivilized, brutal and sexual to what the Western Subject is contrasted as capable of reason and self-control and, therefore, autonomous. Orientalism, therefore, serves the advancement of the Western identity placed on a pedestal because it is presumably modern and developed. Said (1978) in this light stressed that “European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self.”

Assumed asymmetry of knowledge

The projects are designed to present Germany and Sweden to the participants who, although sometimes living there for a while, are deemed ignorant of the local laws, habits and history. This is enforced by the setting of the sessions as classes and the positionality of the leaders as teachers. The TRS session I observed was organised in a very school-like format. The *teacher* was separated from the group and sitting in the front with a PowerPoint presentation, leading the session, allowing breaks, asking questions and giving what sounded like the right answers.

Conversely, the instructors interviewed showed a striking confidence and readiness to talk about the participants, “their home country” and “their culture.” The contrast between the vagueness of their speech generalising what happens in “countries like that” and the assurance of their comments was especially noticeable. None of them seem to question their legitimacy or expertise to speak about the participants’ countries of origin and everyone else living there.

The histories and geographies of the countries where the participants come from are frequently silenced and thus erased while, on the contrary, the history and borders of Germany and Sweden are emphasised. The participants are frequently interrogated about *their* country and culture but the ownership of their own story and cultural background appears to be limited. To give an example, the instructor of the TRS session questioned the female participants about their relationship with their husbands and about their reaction if their daughters were raped. On top of the strongly biased tone of the questions, she wasn’t enthusiastic about the participants’ responses and opinions as the women gave the answer that the instructor expected to teach them, namely that consent is important in a relationship and that no victim of rape is responsible for it. However, the instructor’s attention was sparked when one of them began to narrate about misogynist practices that exist in Afghanistan because it confirmed the image of brutal Afghani patriarchy she had in mind which justified her very presence in the course. The interviewees’ desire to learn about the participants’ cultural background seems indeed to fall short whenever it differs from their expectations. As such, knowledge about them remains blurry, prejudiced and without specific contextual nuances.

Such implied asymmetry of knowledge is inevitably tied to a particular power dynamic that can be scrutinised through the concepts of *discourse and power* as formulated by Michel Foucault. In the Foucauldian understanding, discourse refers to the production of knowledge about objects and practises by characterising, framing, commenting on them and, consequently, giving them meaning within, as he calls it, an *episteme*: “the way of thinking or the state of knowledge at any one time” that sets the possibilities and limits of the production of knowledge (Hall in Seale 2004,

346). Discourses define and, thus, construct the objects of knowledge.

Gendered orientalism and the vilification of the *othered* masculinity

After untangling the stakes of the discussed *othering* process, I would like to get to the heart of the topic and specifically focus on *othered* masculinity. Yeğenoğlu challenges Said for relegating orientalism to a sphere of secondary importance in his analysis and declares that “a more sexualized reading of orientalism reveals that representations of sexual difference cannot be treated as its subdomain; it is a fundamental importance in the formation of a colonial subject position” (1998, 2). As such, Rana Kabbani exposes the contrasted portrayal of men and women formative of the colonial subject and writes that “Oriental males [...] are almost always portrayed as predatory figures in orientalist painting. They are mostly shown as ugly or loathsome, in contrast to the women who are beautiful and voluptuous” (Kabbani 1986, 79).

The discourse scrutinised in this article is indeed recurrently gendered. The male representation greatly differs from the female representation. Women are described as shy, limited to a constraining role of mothers and obedient to their husbands. “Some of them [women] have pressure to get more babies, it’s part of how they grew up and maybe they don’t want and it’s difficult and if you come from a society where having joyful sex is no topic. . .” The sex therapist from Berlin asserts: “In some countries, especially the women, do not have freedom, have to stay at home and are forced to accept the situation.”

Men are instead depicted as dominant, controlling women and abiding to rape culture. “There was one guy, he said he was from a very religious family in Afghanistan, and like one day he was in charge of the family and he had the role of making sure that the women behaved properly. . . controlling them and that’s what he did.” Men apparently do not recognise a rape scene when shown during the TRS session and blame it on the victim: “Generally women react quite critically ‘men are evil, they are violent, like animals’ and the men usually react differently saying ‘it’s the fault of the girl because she wasn’t in the need to go upstairs, she shouldn’t go to parties, she should stay at home.’”

The project TRS was drafted in Norway by the private organisation HERO in charge of refugee centers as a result to, as they explain on their website, the increase of sexual abuse cases. The organisation, therefore, led a collaboration with the local police, immigrant organisations, the Church and the municipality to prevent the violence. The very purpose of the project is indeed “rape prevention,” in collaboration with the police that, as written on the HERO website, shared their statistics on crime with the organisation for them to draft an informed and targeted project: the Together for Respect and Security programme. The amalgam between refugees and criminals in this case is thus evident, however, never stated. The security-related terminology employed to describe the project that is specifically targeting newly arrived immigrants also confirms the link made.

The myth of the “oriental predatory man” although roughly dating back to the 18th century (Said 1978) has resurfaced, after the 9/11 trauma and, more recently, after the Cologne events during the New Year’s Eve 2015/2016. “This reactivated the dichotomy of civilization and barbarity, constructing black and brown racialized masculinities as ‘premodern,’ lacking control over

their sexuality and having a patriarchal, misogynist mindset. In political talk shows, experts reiterated that the problem was the poor adjustment of these men to the ruling ‘normative gender order’ (Rodríguez 2018, 17).

On the other hand, the deemed ideal masculinity, although barely admitted, is personified by “Swedish” and “German” men. An instructor from Snacka Jämtland elaborates on the construction of masculinity and explains that it is the same definition everywhere: “that a man should be strong, a man should provide for the family, a man shouldn’t cry etc.” Yet, she continues: “I think the awareness that it shouldn’t be like that and that you can question it is of course much bigger in Sweden.” Likewise, a course leader from TRS narrates the story of a participant presented as an example of success: “When I got here, gender was very important to me, I identified as a man and women are this way but now I don’t think of it this way. I’m a guy but I could have been something else, it’s who I am as a person that is important, I don’t really think whether I’m a guy or not because people can do what they want and choose for themselves. So that doesn’t really matter to me.”

Additionally, it is worth mentioning that the vilification of the masculinity of the Other as a predator to women is not particular to orientalist representations but seems to be a recurrent trope in different historical and geographical contexts. Angela Y. Davis, for example, examines the creation of the myth of the “Black rapist” in the aftermath of the Civil War in the U.S. as a justification for the lynching of Black people and, therefore, a new weapon to assert White supremacy after the abolition of slavery (Davis 1983). Sara R. Farris mentions as well that “in western Europe the male immigrant threat in the 1990s came from the East. The bad immigrant was mostly embodied by the Eastern European men, usually portrayed as involved in criminal activities and sex trafficking while women from these countries were often depicted as victims of a backward culture and/or of the sex industry” (Farris 2017, 11). The stigmatisation of the masculinity of the Other as mistreating women has however taken different shapes. Ewing reminds us of the ambivalence in colonial representations varying “between the hypersexed, patriarchal savage and the effeminate, subordinate other” (2008, 14) which she illustrates with the depiction of the masculinity of the Jew during Nazi Germany as “effeminate in sometimes fantastic ways” (14).

To sum up, the sexual differentiation at play in xenophobic, *othering* and orientalist representations has been labelled as “sexualisation of racism.” First coined by Calvin Hernton in 1965, Sara R. Farris offers a useful definition of it that is twofold:

On the one hand, the notion of sexualization of racism emphasizes that racism is sexed because it relies on different stereotypes of Othered men and women—as oppressors and sexual threats, and as victims and sexual objects/property, respectively. But it is also sexualized insofar as the racist imagery operates through powerful sexual metaphors and desires. That is, racist ideologies express the desire to dominate the Other through the fantasies of possessing the body of the racialized woman and of sexually humiliating the racialized man. (2017, 73-74)

Female body and the nation

Although “all nations depend on powerful constructions of gender” (McClintock 1993), the differentiated implication of women and men and of femininity and masculinity in nationalist discourses and processes has long been ignored (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1989; McClintock 1993). “Women

are represented as the atavistic and authentic body of national tradition (inert, backward-looking, and natural), embodying nationalism's conservative principle of continuity. Men, by contrast, represent the progressive agent of national modernity (forward-thrusting, potent and historic), embodying nationalism's progressive, or revolutionary principle of discontinuity" (McClintock 1993, 66). The nationalist ideology holds women to a position of markers of the differences between the *national* and the *foreign*. To illustrate, in analysing the significance of the Islamic veil during the colonisation of Algeria, "Fanon perceives that nationalism, as a politics of visibility, implicates women and men in different ways. Because, for male nationalists, women serve as the visible markers of national homogeneity, they become subjected to especially vigilant and violent discipline. Hence the intense emotive politics of the dress" (McClintock 1995, 365).

The comparison between *local* and *immigrant* women is commonly made and more frequent than the comparison between men. It is, again, embedded in *othering* discourses that portray the White or *local* woman as the emancipated figure that the *immigrant* woman could resemble if she wished to. For instance, the authors Sager and Mulinari describe, in the Swedish context, the creation of "the category of 'women' as white (and 'Swedish'), as powerful, autonomous and closely identified with gender equality. Thus, in all ways this construction of Swedish women contrasts with the construction of their oppressed third-world migrant sisters. This imagined category of 'women' is described as being vulnerable in only one way: This is in relation to the threats of supposedly dangerous, and most particularly black and Muslim, migrant men" (Sager and Mulinari 2018, 150).

Likewise, the TRS curriculum includes a powerpoint slide showing a Brown woman wearing the hijab and a White woman in a short skirt. The participants are encouraged to comment on both pictures. It is obvious that the choice of imagery of both women represent the stereotypical idea of the *Western* woman, wearing a short skirt (hence free); versus the *Oriental* woman wearing the hijab (hence oppressed). The instructor, indeed, comments on the pictures and estimates that "women can look very differently, they can dress differently, why they dress so that we don't know, but here each woman can wear what they want and nobody can tell them that it's not good" and "nobody has the right to touch, people should be respectful."

The hijab is indeed a strong symbol in orientalist representation portraying women as vulnerable and in the grip of *Oriental* patriarchy. Frantz Fanon, in his analysis of the gendered colonial methods adopted by the French administration during the occupation of Algeria already mentioned above, deconstructs the meaning the hijab holds to the colonists and the stakes that are involved in inciting women to abduct it. He exposes how, after studying the crucial position of women in Algerian society, the colonial administration developed a rhetoric that would turn them against Algerian men by shaming the wearing of the Islamic veil as a symbol of local patriarchy that Algerian women should emancipate themselves from. "Convening the woman, winning her over to the foreign values, wrenching her free from her status, was at the same time achieving a real power over the man and attaining a practical, effective means of destructuring Algerian culture" (Fanon 1965, 39).

Consequently, it appears obvious that the production of *national difference* in *integration* courses is both gendered and racial and that the depictions of female bodies, their clothing and attitudes are used as visual banners of the imagined norms and values of the nation and of those of the foreign nation.

Threat/security/saviour nexus

An important trope in the production of racial and gendered differences is the colonial fantasy of “white men saving brown women from brown men” (Spivak in Morris 2010, 48). Spivak uses this example to illustrate the position of *Third-world women* as *subaltern* who, caught up between imperialism and patriarchy, modernisation and tradition, cannot be heard or even speak. It therefore becomes obvious that the orientalist stigmatisation of Brown women as passive victims and the rhetoric of “saving brown women” from patriarchy with imperialist means is less about giving *subaltern* women the space to speak and assert themselves than placing White men above Brown men and feeding a colonial ideology (Spivak in Morris 2010).

A striking example I observed is a video made by the organisation HERO for the “rape prevention” project shown to the participants for discussion. The animation video pictures a veiled Brown woman with her daughter at home and a visitor, a Brown man who seems to be a relative. When the woman is gone, the man touches the girl inappropriately and later on, as she was doing her homework, sexually abuses her. A voice over tells (in English): “It is never your fault if you are subject to rape or sexual assault, the perpetrator is always to blame. Forcing someone to have sex is illegal and therefore punishable by law. Although it might seem difficult, sharing how you feel with someone you trust is a good idea. If you have been raped, you can always talk to a teacher, a school nurse or a doctor. They can help you.” The girl then goes to school to speak to a smiling White woman.

This video illustrates well the depiction of the Brown man as the villain whose abusive behaviour is taken for granted. He is not defined and his relationship to the mother or the daughter is unknown to us. The only facets that define him are his age, his skin colour and the fact that he is known to the mother. That way, the criminal represents any adult Brown man from the mother’s circle. Moreover, what is encouraged here is not to change the man’s attitude towards women but rather to “save” the girl from her toxic environment. The mother is indeed not mentioned as a potential helper who is instead the White woman representing the State institutions.

To continue, the idea that Brown women are in need to be rescued from their Brown male relatives is substantiated by the leitmotif of marital rape. The curriculum of Snacka Jämmt encourages, for instance, the instructors to discuss consent and sexuality and defines: “What is meant by rape is that, also within marriage, there must be consent to sex.” Similarly, a leader insists that “in every relationship but also in the marriage, husband and wife should agree. Here it is not allowed that the man wants to have sex while she doesn’t want it, it’s also punishable.” She continues and advises the women to tell their husbands: “no, you can’t do it, we are in Germany, it’s illegal!” The translator even replies: “Yes but they are fine, they are all happy with their husbands.” Alongside the fact that she takes for granted that their husbands abuse them, the instructor regards their arrival in Germany as a guarantee of safety.

Now, as much as Spivak’s notion of “White men saving Brown women from Brown men” is an interesting filter to scrutinise the intersectional stakes in the integration programmes, the results of my analysis are more nuanced. The figure of the saviour that emerges is less the White man than White people in general, often embodied by the State. The State institutions, the law, the government are indeed evoked as the guarantors of freedom and protection, assuring the respect of the liberal rights. Women are encouraged to go to the police to seek help when they feel threatened, they are encouraged to talk to school teachers when they have been abused, they are encouraged to hold the law against their disrespectful husbands as a protection. Moreover, the

desire to “rescue” seems to apply to men as well who are portrayed as liberated from the alleged oppressive and homophobic norms of their countries of origin and are now able to express their potential homosexuality.

Sager and Mulnari inquired about Swedish far right-wing discourses and stated that “the construction on one side of the dangerous Other and on the other the figure of vulnerable women provides the party with the possibility of linking its authoritarianism (law and order) with its racism” (151). They, however, insist on the threats and attacks female feminist activists have been enduring from the police and neo-nazis and show the contradiction between the portrayal of women as both victims and threats (when feminist activists). Suvi Keskinen offers an explanation: “I developed the concept *white border guard masculinities* to grasp the processes of defending the allegedly threatened gendered and racialised order through a reinstalling of white masculine power, yet in a form that requires a re-imagining of political subjectivities. Policing gendered, sexualised and racialised borders is central for such masculinities” (2018, 158).

Anti-multiculturalist and assimilationist undertones

To continue, the integration courses present anti-multiculturalist and assimilationist undertones that betray a *liberal paradox*. One course leader declares that “there’s a conflict between adapting, integrating into Swedish society and you have these two forces, one saying you have to do this and you can’t change...you’re part of us, you’re a son... And that is a conflict between two systems, two forces pulling in different directions.” Similarly, “if a person retains their culture, it can be difficult to be accepted in Sweden, while it can be as difficult to be accepted by family and friends if the person becomes too Swedish.”

The described impossibility of anything in-between the “two forces” implies the necessity for the participants to *assimilate* and raises the question of belonging - “you’re part of us.” The reference to the family and peers is also worth analysing. The participants apparently face the dilemma of choosing between their family and what is referred to as “the Swedish society,” a dilemma that is seemingly posed by the two groups themselves who would not accept them if they do not choose to fully belong to their group.

This assimilationist point of view is confirmed by the integration programmes themselves and their purpose. If one reads between the lines, the actual purpose that leaks out is to challenge the participants’ assumed take on gender identity, gender relations and sexuality and to mould them according to the (also assumed) local values and behaviours. “It takes time and they come from another environment, another culture and it’s very hard to change your thoughts from one day to another.” “Overall the main point is that they discuss, that they think about things in another way than they used to.”

It is interesting to notice the flagrant contradiction with the recurrently highlighted self-identification as liberal: “we have here in my opinion a big freedom. In this society, we live how we decide as long as we are nice to each other, so we have a lot of personal freedom.” Likewise, a course leader from Snacka Jämtland defends that the participants have a “fascination for a society where you can choose for yourself and if you deny others that right, you deny yourself that right. So usually in discussion they are very open-minded to sexualities, it’s okay you can choose for yourself and I can choose for myself, which I couldn’t when I was for example in Afghanistan.”

In both examples, the educators express the importance of tolerance and respect for others in a liberal society. The message conveyed is however one-sided as it is presumed that the participants will be accepted and respected only if they think and behave in a certain way. The considered liberal society, therefore, strongly contrasts with the lack of tolerance for the presumed cultural norms of the participants. An interesting example occurred during a Snacka Jämmt session when the instructor asked the participants about the different constitutions of a family, once again, insisting on the possibility of homoparenthood or single parenthood and drawing the various constellations on the board to display their variety. One participant, however, mentioned polygamy as an existing constellation which made the instructor quite uncomfortable. She acknowledged that it could be a family structure but didn't add it on the board.

Authors who investigated the "Dutch integration exam" which is mandatory for asylum seekers, named such a phenomenon the *paradox of repressive liberalism*: "Although one is locked in a collective culture with different values, at the same time, one has the individual possibility of free choice. Here, the notion of 'free choice' implies a call for self-liberation by embracing Dutch values. At work is an (ethno)culturalist ontology in which the disintegrated and over-cultured dangerous migrant can simply make a neoliberal, individualistic choice to 'be like us'" (de Leeuw and van Wichelen 2012, 198-199).

"In the name of women's rights"

To continue, the notions of integration and multiculturalism have quite recently been phrased and debated in relation to women's rights. The two projects fall into this discussion as they are responses to the sentiment of a "refugee crisis" and the constructed figure of the Brown and Black male sexual criminal whose presence generates questions around cultural plurality and women's safety.

"Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?" asks Susan Okin in a collective book on the problem of granting minority rights to groups that have more acute patriarchal norms than the society where they are cultural minorities (Okin et al. 1999). She argues that minority rights do not guarantee the rights of the subalterns of the group, often women, or even reinforces their domination within the group. Her main arguments are that "they tend to treat cultural groups as monoliths" (12) ignoring the power structures within the group and "advocates of group rights pay little or no attention to the private sphere" (12) where the domination of women and girls is often the most severe. Bonnie Honig, who responds in the book, questions Okin's underlying assumption that feminism is systematically winning when associated with liberalism and that "the unfamiliar practices she labels sexist are more complicated and ambiguous than that label allows" (36-37).

An excellent analysis summarising and intersecting all the positions and theories discussed previously is to be found in the book "In the name of women's rights" by Sara Farris (2017). She asserts that, while the prejudiced portrayal of *Oriental* men and women dates back from colonisation, the convergence of anti-Muslim positions from far right-wing nationalists, neoliberals and certain feminists is a millennial phenomenon that the author coined as *femonationalism* (Farris 2017). "Short for 'feminist and femocratic nationalism,' femonationalism refers both to the exploitation of feminist themes by nationalists and neoliberals in anti-Islam [...] campaigns and to the participation of certain feminists and femocrats in the stigmatization of Muslim men

under the banner of gender equality” (2017, 4).

Similar to the “neoliberals” and “feminists” referred to in Farris’ study, the instructors of the course often self-proclaim as progressives and anti-racist liberals and yet participate in the stigmatisation of the participants. Farris elaborates and explains that “the common denominator of their anti-Islam stance is a fundamental agreement that gender relations in the West are more advanced and must be taught to Muslim women, who are otherwise taken to be agentless objects at the mercy of their patriarchal cultures” (2017, 7-8). As a result, Western European countries have introduced civic integration policies targeting newly arrived immigrants, specifically from Muslim countries, teaching Western liberal values and focusing on women’s rights. “These policies [...] are informed by the neoliberal logic of workfare and individual responsibility and have blended together with the right-wing ideology of homogeneity and superiority of the (Western) nation as well as with the “westcentric” feminist notion of emancipation through work” (2017, 8).

Conclusion

Although some aspects of the projects are more pronounced in one or in the other, they are pervasive in different proportions in the two. Additionally, orientalist prejudices are inevitably ubiquitous in both projects and are at the root of the initiatives. They are based on the anxiety that immigrants are ultimately different and will not be able to adapt to the ‘new’ society because of their divergent cultural traits, particularly with regard to sexuality and gender equality; that Muslim immigrants have toxic sexual norms and behaviours, to the detriment of women; and that gender equality and feminism are more favourable and intrinsic European values.

Such prejudices and ideologies inform the three main results I have divided this thesis into. The first and most obvious one is the processes whereby the participants are *othered* on the basis of their alleged familiarity to a non-democratic and religious societal organisation, their supposed lack of cultural self-awareness, thus limited agency and open-mindedness and their purported taboo and pernicious approach to sexuality. The second one is the sexualised apprehension of the national foreigner and the gendered and racist pattern of vilifying the male *Other* as a brutal patriarch and/or sexual offender and positioning the female *Other* in an ambiguous stand of the simultaneous bodily representation of the foreign culture and the incarnation of the possibility of assimilation. Finally, the third one is the contradiction between the projects’ self labelling as liberal and tolerant and their engagement for the assimilation of the participants who are stigmatised based on orientalist imaginary.

As Farris concludes about civic integration courses in France, Italy and the Netherlands, “they urge migrants both to acknowledge women’s rights as a central value of the West and to assimilate to western cultural practices, which are presented as more civilizationally advanced” (2017, 2-3).

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Notes

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