

## INTRODUCTION: INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON GENDER, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

**Habiba Zaman, Shaojun Chen, Xiujie Zhu, Sanzida Habib**

This International Workshop on Gender, Diversity, and Inclusion was an outcome of the collaborative effort by the Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies (GSWS) at Simon Fraser University (SFU) in Canada and the Research Center for Gender and Development of Hohai University (HHU) in Nanjing, China. In 2017, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the SFU Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) and the HHU School of Public Administration was signed by both universities. One of the stated objectives was to organize a collaborative international workshop on gender and diversity at SFU in 2019.

### **Background to the International Workshop**

Dr. Habiba Zaman visited Hohai University as an advisory professor at the Research Center for Gender and Development (RCGD) a total of three times (in 2016, 2018, and 2019). The current Director of RCGD, Dr. Zhu Xiujie, was her counterpart during these three visits and organized all events and programs, which included lectures, graduate seminars, public lectures, and day-long conferences. These events and activities were organized and/or sponsored by the School (Faculty) of Public Administration, which consists of five departments (Sociology, Social Work, Public Policy/Administration, Land Management, and Resettlement Management Science). The Research Center for Gender and Development is also located in the School of Public Administration. The School has a large pool of international students from many countries, including Ghana, Tanzania, South Africa, Uganda, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Niger, Madagascar, Samoa, Peru, Liberia, Russia, Nigeria, France, Tajikistan, Laos, Cambodia, Pakistan, Iran, and Bangladesh. There was a very vibrant and impressive international student community on campus. It should be mentioned that the International Office of Hohai University coordinated all aspects of Professor Habiba Zaman's lectures, travel plan, and accommodation. The International Office also provided her with a Research Assistant. The support and services at HHU were exemplary.

In addition to many graduate seminars and public lectures delivered at HHU, several collaborative efforts were planned under the MOU. In 2018, under the leadership of Dr. Zhu Xiujie, Professor Habiba Zaman organized a one-day workshop offered on May 20 at HHU. The first part of the workshop comprised presentations by academics from three more universities in Nanjing and representatives from the China Women's Federation. The second part of the workshop was an information session on gender and women's studies in Canada. This session inspired the idea of organizing an international workshop on gender in 2019 at Simon Fraser University in Canada, as well as the possibility of attending and

presenting at the Canadian Federation of Humanities and Social Sciences 2019 Congress at the University of British Columbia.

Another important event was led by Professor Chen Shaojun, with support and assistance from Professor Habiba Zaman. For the first time, the School of Public Administration at Hohai University organized the International Graduate Forum on Migration, Development, Gender, and Poverty Alleviation on May 22, 2018. In all, 21 national and international graduate students attended and presented their research papers. The objectives of this one-day forum were to: (i) bring graduate students together to share their research; (ii) build graduate students' capacity as future academics, researchers, and community organizers; and (iii) promote development awareness on a global scale and thus support global leadership and citizenship. Professor Habiba Zaman delivered the opening remarks and chaired two sessions entitled "Migration" and "Gender."

In 2019, Professor Habiba Zaman attended the International Workshop on Development Forced Displacement and Resettlement (DFDR), jointly organized by the NRCR (National Research Center for Resettlement), Hohai University, and the INDR (International Network on Displacement and Resettlement) at Hohai University's downtown campus. Professor Shi Guoqing (Former Dean of the School of Public Administration) was the key organizer of this conference. For the INDR conference, Dr. Zhu Xiujie and Professor Habiba Zaman proposed a session on gender and diversity at the DFDR Meeting. Based on the proposal, the Research Center for Gender and Development at Hohai University, Nanjing, organized three special/concurrent sessions consisting of 12 papers on gender in resettlement forums. This was the first time the DFDR organized any separate forum on gender. Professor Shi Guoqing (the first and former Director of RCGD) proposed the international workshop at SFU and served as one of the organizers, although he was unable to attend the event. Professor Shi's message to the workshop has been included in the published proceedings.

### **International Workshop at SFU, Vancouver Campus**

The objectives of the workshop that took place on June 1, 2019 were to: (i) provide an overview of gender variations, various discourses on genders, and conceptions/misconceptions of genders; (ii) examine conventional gendered and sexed narratives in various societies including in Canada by using the diverse and intersectional nature of gender and sexuality as an integral tool of analysis; (iii) understand how gender roles/norms crystallize in various contexts, and by so doing, marginalize non-binary groups; (iv) identify and discuss the extent to which international development projects either neglect or incorporate genders; and finally, (v) illustrate inclusive and effective languages and strategies to incorporate various forms of genders and their intersections with other forms of sociocultural diversity as well as inequality in research and literature.

Five academics from China—three from Hohai University in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province and two from China Three Gorges University (CTG) in Yichang, Hubei Province—attended this workshop. These professors were Dr. Chen Shaojun, Dr. Xhu Xiujie, and Dr. Wu Yanhua of HHU, along with Dr. Duan Yuefang and Dr. Zhao Kevin of CTG. Both Dr. Duan

and Dr. Zhao also delivered lectures on the Three Gorges Dam in Professor Habiba Zaman's GSWS 309: Gender and International Development class at SFU's main campus in Burnaby.

In contrast to the traditional 20-minute paper presentation followed by comments and questions, the workshop intended to maximize discussion, participation, and exchange of ideas among the attendees. The workshop facilitator briefly introduced and invited each presenter to deliver a short 10-minute presentation, after which the next 10 minutes were devoted to engaging discussion through questions and answers. After each presentation, facilitators and panelists raised questions, but did not necessarily answer all of them. Following this, workshop participants were invited to offer comments and questions. This created an opportunity for maximum input on the topics by all speakers as well as effective interactions among speakers and participants.

Recorders were recruited to take notes for all the sessions, enabling the organizers to prepare a session summary for both the hard copy and digitized version of the workshop proceedings. We are thankful to SFU Library for publishing the proceedings electronically for the larger/global community. Video recordings of all the sessions are also available on YouTube. We express gratitude to Mazhar Haque, an event volunteer, for meticulously recording and editing all the presentations. Additional hard copies of the proceedings are expected to be published by Hohai University for the use of students and researchers.

Professor Lara Campbell, Chair of the Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies at SFU, delivered the opening remarks and welcomed the participants of the workshop. Professor Campbell eloquently set forth the vision of GSWS, which aspires to offer feminist intersectional analysis of power in local, national, and global contexts. According to Professor Campbell, SFU's GSWS is a department that fosters and nurtures the creation of critical, engaged, and meaningful research on inclusion, diversity, rights, and social justice.

Dr. Campbell's remarks were followed by the opening remarks of Dr. Zhu Xiujie, Director of the HHU Research Center for Gender and Development. Professor Zhu provided a brief historical background of Hohai University and the RCGD, pointing out that the goal of the RCGD was the creation of an open platform for students, faculty members, and academics interested in "social gender research" through teaching, training, and research. Both sets of opening remarks are included in the workshop proceedings.

The workshop was structured into four independent sessions (see program attached in the Appendix): Session I was titled *Gender and Diversity*; Session II addressed *Gender and Sexuality*; Session III covered the issue of *Gender and Society*; and Session IV employed a *Gender Lens in International Development Projects*. Dr. Rebecca Yoshizawa, Dr. Habiba Zaman, Dr. Shaojun Chen, and Dr. Sanzida Habib steered the corresponding sessions as workshop facilitators. In all, 13 presenters put forward innovative academic insights on the respective topics, generating lively discussions in each session. The presenters included faculty members (representing institutions such as Simon Fraser University, Hohai University, the University of British Columbia, and Kwantlen University),

graduate students, community activists, and development practitioners. Of the 13 presenters, seven submitted expanded and completed versions of their papers for publication. One presenter submitted a written version of their paper as presented at one of the sessions, and this has been included in the Appendix. We are sincerely indebted to all the authors who reworked their papers even during the pandemic period, which has disrupted lives around the world in numerous ways. These papers are compiled in Section I of the proceedings.

The absence from the proceedings of the five other papers originally presented at the workshop is compensated for by the inclusion of session notes captured by our brilliant notetakers. They diligently recorded the presentations in all four sessions. There were eight note-takers in total, with two responsible for each session: Dr. Sanzida Habib and Parboti Roy for Session I, Jessica Horsnell and Veronica Sudesh for Session II, Shoak Alhussami and Leena Hasan for Session III, and Somayeh Bahrami and Rima Farris for the final session (Session IV). All except Dr. Habib were either PhD or MA students of SFU and UBC. Six out of seven were from the GSWS department at SFU. These notetakers documented the presentations as well as the question-and-answer sessions in a comprehensive way so that readers could understand the breadth and intensity of each session. As editors, we decided to include the gist from each session in Section II of the proceedings.

### **Summary and Contributions of the International Workshop**

This collaborative international workshop jointly organized by the SFU Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies and Hohai University's Research Center for Gender and Development is the first ever initiative undertaken by both units. This one-day event has brought together scholars from the two countries for mutual learning experiences on binary and non-binary gender as well as emerging academic discourses and knowledge. The editors recognize that this joint international workshop created a number of significant contributions through collaborations by all involved at the community, university, and international levels. The following is a brief summary of the key contributions.

The topic of the International Workshop on Gender, Diversity, and Inclusion fits perfectly with Simon Fraser University's current overarching vision of *Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion*. Further, SFU's principal motto has always been *Community Engagement*. The first presentation at the workshop as well as the first paper in the proceedings, by Reema Faris, critically dissects the binary notion of gender and argues for the significance of non-binary gender. June Scudeler brings up "Indigenous ways of knowing" and explains "Two-Spirit" as an Indigenous term for special people who do not belong to the gender binary, distinct from Western notions of LGBTQ+ identity. Locating her positionality as a colonial settler, Tiffany Muller Myrdahl explains the significance of decolonization and unlearning colonizer's tools. Tiffany's work centers around sex and sexuality in the city as well as in urban spaces. Ann Travers, based on in-depth research with trans children, strongly argues for a paradigm shift in the medicalization of trans kids—i.e., from corrective to affirming healthcare. According to Ann, many non-binary kids encounter binary-confirming education, identity politics, classism, racism, and so on.

The next set of presentations and papers link gender with women's experiences of migration and settlement in a new country, specifically China and Canada. Wu Yanhua links gender and migration with poverty among women in Myanmar who marry Chinese men in the novel marital and gendered migration system. Highlighting women's migration and settlement experiences in Canada varied by age, education, nationality, and English-language skills, Sanzida Habib demonstrates how structural barriers such as socioeconomic and financial hardship due to unemployment and underemployment, isolation, childcare, household responsibilities, and systemic racism adversely affect women's health (both mental and physical) and access to healthcare services. Zhu Xiujie explains the role of the All China Women's Federation (ACWF) in tackling gender discrimination in employment through such measures as gender equality assessments and policy regulations at both the national and local level.

Zafar Adeel reports that approximately 1.8 billion people in parts of India, China, the Middle East, and Africa will likely face water scarcity by 2025 and remain vulnerable, particularly in conflict zones in the Middle East where women and girls face the risk of ongoing danger, instability, and conflict—a troubling sign not only for gender equity but for peace and security as well. Rina Pradhan has identified health risks associated with teenage pregnancy in Nepal, such as obstructed labour, postpartum infections, pregnancy-induced hypertension, spontaneous abortions, maternal morbidity, etc.; intervention programs are required at an early age (as soon as girls begin puberty) and should continue through secondary school, including improved healthcare during and after pregnancy. The issue of reproductive rights and justice is further reflected in Rebecca Yoshizawa's presentation, in which she argues that no woman or child should have to live in fear of violence in their own home or experience a lack of access to resources due to intimate partner violence. Accordingly, not only should abortion remain legal, but all women, including women living in poverty—who are disproportionately likely to be Black, Indigenous, and racialized—should actually have access to it. Chen Shaojun's paper argues that gender impact assessments are necessary for all development projects; further, gender mainstreaming as a planning tool should serve to minimize the adverse impacts of development projects on the lives of women and ultimately empower them.

The presenters and scholars—both emerging and experienced, and coming from multiple universities in China and Canada—offer diverse perspectives, including non-heterosexual, anti-homophobic, trans-positive, feminist, Indigenous, decolonizing, antiracist, and intersectional approaches to challenge gender binaries and heteronormativity. Their work highlights not only the diversity within gender and other markers of unequal relations, but also the diverse ways of knowing and crafting a sense of our social worlds. This international workshop has promoted the inclusion of gender and diversity perspectives in research and scholarship to understand individuals' personal, interpersonal, collective, local, national, and international experiences in the family, community, and nation, in healthcare and other social-service settings, and in economic and development activities—in times of peace, transition, and conflict. The workshop has also fulfilled our commitment to the inclusion of a gender and diversity lens to facilitate critical understandings of the diverse experiences of women, men, trans children, and

young girls in local, national, and global contexts. It has demonstrated that such perspectives and convictions can enable vulnerable individuals' empowerment as well as social justice and equity for all, irrespective of gender, age, race, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, and other dynamic social relations of power.

This international workshop has further served as a training platform for students, particularly SFU's GSWS PhD and MA students. Not only did they attend and actively participate in the day-long workshop from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, but some of them took comprehensive notes on each presentation and Q&A session. We hope our readers will find their notes practical, informative, and valuable from an academic point of view. Without the support of the energetic student volunteers and emerging scholars, the workshop would not have happened smoothly, nor would the contributions of these scholarly exchanges have been completely documented.

The proceedings will be published in the beginning of 2021, although the international workshop was held in June 2019. The Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 has caused extraordinary levels of stress and difficulty, especially for women balancing academic work with childcare, eldercare, and other responsibilities at home. Writing and editing papers during the pandemic has generated an exceptional burden for some authors (and the editors, across multiple continents) and thus delayed the publication. Coincidentally, SFU GSWS will be celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2021. This is a time for all of us to remember the prolonged and profound path GSWS has trekked over the past 50 years. We hope the published proceedings of the international workshop—the outcome of a groundbreaking collaborative effort across borders and disciplines—will be considered an important milestone for the historic journey of SFU's Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Department, as well as for the HHU Research Center for Gender and Development. As editors, we humbly recognize this unique outcome.

## GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND DIVERSITY



- ❖ I believe that gender is something between your ears, not between your legs.

—*Chaz Bono*

- ❖ No government has the right to tell its citizens when or whom to love. The only queer people are those who don't love anybody.

— *Rita Mae Brown*