

# *Family, Gender and Sexuality*

## Seminar

### *From Sex Roles to Gender Structure: Understanding Inequality for Social Change*

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#### Discussants

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Sala Laurea-Rossa

University of Turin

Campus Luigi Einaudi

Via Lungo Dora Siena, 100—Turin



This talk has three major goals. First, I provide a succinct intellectual history of research and theorizing about gender in the social sciences in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century until today. I do this to provide a baseline for the introduction of my argument that gender is a social structure. Second, I propose a theoretical framework for conceptualizing *gender as a structure* of social stratification. My theoretical argument directs attention to three distinct levels of analysis: the individual, the interactional, and the macro, as well as the causal and recursive relationships between them. At the individual level of analysis, attention is focused on the development and internalization of sex difference. At the interactional, attention is focused on the stability and changing expectations we hold for each sex during social interaction. At the macro level, attention is directed to the mechanisms by which gender is embedded into the cultural logic and accompanying rules of social institutions and organizations. My theoretical work has been revised to differentiate between the material organization of social life and the cultural logic within each level of analysis. My third and final goal is to illustrate the usefulness of my theoretical framework for empirical research and policy applications with reference both to my own empirical work and with the work of others. I conclude with an argument that conceptualizing gender as a social structure will facilitate more effective policies designed to promote gender equality.

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