

# Feminist Perspectives on Research Methodology

Three day workshop

Part of exchange between TISS and London Metropolitan University under the auspices of British Council Supported Indo- UK Research Link Programme

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The workshop will begin each day with a presentation from Prof Liz Kelly, Child and Women Abuse Studies Unit, London Metropolitan University on core issues and debates. Time for discussion and debate will be followed by a question to be explored in small groups. Each morning will conclude with a brief summary of the content and key debate / discussion points.

The afternoon sessions will comprise of two presentations by Indian scholars based on feminist researches/ researches with women, of about 45 minutes each, followed with discussions between students, faculty, resource persons and other participants on their engagement with key themes/concepts/questions raised in the presentations, in the morning and the afternoon. The focus in the presentations by Indian Resource Persons may be on issues/questions that have troubled/are troubling about the relationship between feminism and methodology and/or the ways in which actually doing research is different from how text books present it and they had planned it. The point is to explore some of the real world messiness and contradictions that tend to be written out of academic reports. The Resource Persons may choose one or more of the themes proposed by Prof. Liz Kelly as their starting point, give brief descriptions of how this has been an issue in their own work, and the questions and challenges they think are raised. This we think will make for a good opportunity to dialogue on theory, research and practice.

Prof Liz Kelly will conclude the day drawing out the key themes, commonalities and differences across presentations from the UK and the Indian contexts.

## Day 1: Feminist thought: challenges to conventional theories of knowledge and methodology

### *Morning presentation by Prof Liz Kelly to cover*

#### The early critique

- androcentric research
- positivism
- the personal is political

#### Early feminisms

- structure and action, principles
- ways of knowing

#### Identity politics

- Difference, diversity, intersectionality
- Objectivity/subjectivity

## Post-modernism – the cultural turn

### Feminist positions

- Feminist empiricism
- Standpoint epistemology
- Post-modern deconstruction
- Materialist/realist
- Men's/critical men's studies

### Common themes/aims

- Cross-disciplinary
- Contribute to knowledge
- Reflexivity
- Social change/social justice

## Feminist methodology, feminist methods, feminist perspective and practices?

### Afternoon

Resource Persons to reflect on any of the following or related issues/positions from their own work.

- Feminist research is by women, on women, for women
- The status on 'experience' and 'women's experience'
- Essentialism and or intersectionality
- That there is a feminist method or feminist methodology
- That feminist research must be empowering for participants and create social change
- What makes research feminist is the theoretical perspective

## Day 2: Doing a feminist research project: debate, dilemmas and developments

### *Morning presentation by Prof Liz Kelly will cover*

#### Basic issues/decisions

Quantitative/qualitative methods and data

Opposition or continuum

Rigour and claims

Hard, soft and/or deep?

Hypothesis testing, research questions, evaluation, ethnography

Orthodoxies and openness

Resources and context

#### Ethics

Power and transparency

Researching the powerful  
Committees and guidelines  
Who is protecting who?  
Writing – who and what for

### **Feminist engagement with**

Surveys  
Interviews  
Focus groups  
Case studies  
Content and discourse analysis  
Action and participatory research  
False equality?

### **Afternoon**

Resource Persons to reflect on any of the below given or related issues/positions from their own work.

- Ethical dilemmas
- Researching men/institutions/the powerful as a feminist
- Choosing methods linked to research questions
- When what women say does not fit expectations/feminist theory
- Reflexivity – the I in research practice and writing
- Strengths and limits of methods have used
- Questions and fears about methods have not used
- Where the feminism is in your research practice

## **Day 3: Beyond orthodoxies: New approaches and challenges**

*Morning presentation by Prof Liz Kelly will cover*

### **Adapting method to questions**

Every issue is a feminist issue

### **Multi-methodological approaches**

### **Challenging feminist orthodoxies**

Relationships with women's groups  
Asking difficult questions

### **Tales from the field – negotiating the unexpected**

## Public sociology

### Afternoon

Resource Persons to address these or related themes

- When research does not go to plan
- Adaptations in the field
- Negotiating conflicting interests
- Challenging orthodoxies – social science/feminist
- Inclusions and exclusions – what we ask/notice/record/write