

**SYMPOSIUM ON CRISIS:
“Gender Asymmetries, Climate Changes, and Precariousness”
October 26, 2017, Room 224M (LU)**

Symposium Abstract

Gender is a key not only to understand the ramifications of a crisis but also to identify the reasons behind a crisis and how it might be resolved (Aolain 2011; Walby 2015). With this theme, we address a tendency in current crisis studies to bypass the inherently gendered character of a crisis; as a phenomenon and reality composed of modalities and temporalities with divergent impact on the lives of women, men, girls, boys, and further gender identities (de Alwis 2016; Runyan and Peterson 2010). While gender offers a lens for grasping how local worlds are asymmetrically ordered and pinpoint disproportional possibilities for female and male populations, an explicit focus on men and masculinity/ies provides an analytical prism for unfolding how male powers and privileges interlock with the emergence and definition of a crisis; the development and sensitivity of coping strategies; and the gender-specific precariousness, despair, and hope experienced in times of crisis (Connell 2016; Hearn et.al. 2013; Ruspini et.al. 2011).

It is critical to bring “masculinity” into the fore in the study of crisis (Enarson and Pease 2016; Hearn 2015) as an analytical entry point in examining the ways in which male powers and privileges inform definitions of risks (Beck 1992), injustice (Fraser 2000), vulnerability (Butler 2004; Fineman 2008), and ontological security (Giddens 1991; Kinnvall 2017). Masculinity hence takes shape as an influential mechanism, which holds power to fuel and exacerbate established gender imbalances (Buchbinder 2012; Rydstrom 2017). A critical perspective on masculinity therefore is not a matter of studying only men, but rather of paying attention to the relational position of men in the gender order, how men obtain and assert control over women and marginalized masculinities, and how men’s position may not only be justified but also perpetuated before, during, and after a crisis (Bergman-Rosamond et.al. 2016; Connell 2016; Pease 2016).

These tendencies are observable across many issues and arenas, for example, in relation to environmental and climate changes. Social life is altered radically in connection with catastrophes, deforestation, soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, and resource scarcity (Archer and Rahmstorf 2010). Marginalization of poor communities, inability to and failure of autonomous resilience and adaptation lead to increased pressure on livelihoods and can provoke a crisis of gendered inequalities such as observed in the aftermath of hurricanes (Ramasar 2015; True 2013). Increasing resource competition between ethnic, national, or religious groups aligning with competition over diminishing environmental resources could intensify social cleavages and heighten, for instance, masculine identity as a response to climate crisis. Uncertainty of food supply could lead to tipping fragile or unstable situations into risk of conflict (Kahl 2006; Smith and Vivekananda 2009). The effects of a deteriorating environment by large-scale adaptation measures (e.g. dams), austerity, and cuts in expenditure on basic services might cause tensions both at the state level and in daily life (Buhaug et al. 2008; Hamza and Corendea 2012). People might migrate when all else fails leading to encroachment on other groups’ resources, increasing tension, violence, and conflict (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Sorensen 2013). This includes focus on gender-specific coping and



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resilience strategies when life is drastically altered by climate ruptures (Rushton and Youde 2015; Warner 2011).