15 November, 2016

**Nomination of Belen Giaquinta (SJP) for RP best ISS MA Research Paper**

We would like to nominate Belen Giaquinta (SJP) for the best MA Research paper. Her RP is entitled “Silenced Subjectivities & Missed Representations: Unpacking The Gaps Of The International Child Marriage Discourse”

This is an excellent research paper that uses discourse analysis to systematically interrogate the ways in which ‘child marriage’ is constructed as a development problem and a legitimate field of intervention for the development industry. Through a case study of “Girls not Brides’, the biggest global network fighting child marriage, Belen Giaquinta discusses the way in which the discourse of child marriage in the development industry simultaneously reflects and perpetuates (post)colonial relationships of power between the global north and the global south, by positioning the south as the ‘problem’ and necessary object of intervention, and the north as the subject of knowledge and agent of change.

The RP’s theoretical lens applies insights from post-development theory, post-colonial feminism and the new sociology of childhood to the formulation of the research problem and its analysis. There is an explicit, and extremely well-conducted engagement with relevant concepts and debates. The intersection of gender, sexuality, age and race are discussed in a critical engagement with the monolithic representation of young women in the global south as victims of ‘their’ men, and ‘their’ culture – especially in relation to sexuality – and in need of external saviors able to protect them, to unleash their potential and transform them into agents. These representations also rest on ethnocentric and monolithic constructions of childhood and childhood innocence that deny young people – particularly young women in the global south – any sexual agency.

Through a very well-crafted and justified methodological approach, the RP systematically unpacks dominant representations of child marriage, its silences and assumptions – as well as its effects materialized through development interventions – based on both qualitative and quantitative data. Overall this is a timely and much needed critical engagement with the often well-intentioned, yet ill-conceived, ways in which development agents and institutions try to further gender equality in the global south. Belen Giaquinta’s RP cogent analysis of this complex contemporary global development initiative therefore deserves to be nominated for the MA Paper Prize.

Silke Heumann and Kristen Cheney