

Identify and review an ethnography in which one of the three theoretical approaches has been used. Your essay should identify ways in which the influence of the theorist can be discerned and critically assess its application.

Introduction

This paper will address and evaluate the use of Foucault's theories of power and discourse as a framework, in the work of Abu-Lughod (1990) 'The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power Through Bedouin Women'. Abu-Lughod, is an American-Palestine anthropologist, who has since the 1970's carried out fieldwork amongst the Bedouin society in Egypt. Abu-Lughod is currently a professor of anthropology, along with women's studies at Columbia University. Her many ethnographic enquires have focused on a range of topics, mainly centered around gender, political representations and expressive forms of culture in the Middle East.

Through her use of ethnographic fieldwork and Foucauldian theories of power, Abu-Lughod traces the experiences of the Bedouin women and outlines how the women exploit the pre-existing gender inequality discourse, to influence power relations, both within the family and society. This is done so through the use of local traditional forms, which include objecting to husbands their fathers have chosen, hiding knowledge from men, smoking is secret and poetry. The four main types of resistance that are identified by Abu-Lughod (1990) are; minor acts of defiance within the sexually segregated women's realm, resistance to marriages, sexually irrelevant discourse and Ghinnawas (little songs) that express discontent with the opposite sex.

Abu-Lughod's use of Foucauldian theoretical framework

Foucault's work has focused largely on power relations and discourses which uphold these hierarchies. There is some mention of resistance, in his work. However, Abu-lughod extends his ideas to pursue a greater understanding, of the discourses surrounding resistance, within the context of the Bedouin women. The Bedouin are also known as the Awlad' Ali tribe. They are former nomadic shepherds, who have now settled along the Egyptian coast, West of Alexandria towards the Libya border. As a result, the Bedouin women and men, dually identify as Arab whilst affiliating themselves with Bedouin tribes of Eastern Libya (Abu-Lughod, 1990).

Most famously, Abu-Lughod takes one of Foucault's most referenced quotes from his book *'The History of Sexuality'*, 'where there is power, there is resistance and yet or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power' (Foucault, 1978; 95-96) and turns

it on its head. The author does so by inverting Foucault's statement, and asserting instead that 'where there is resistance, there is power' (Abu-Lughod, 1990;41). This she argues, is less problematic and potentially more ethnographically fruitful, as the author acknowledges it enables us to move away from 'abstract theories of power' (Abu-Lughod, 1990;42). As a result, shifting the discourse, toward a contextual and methodological strategy for the study of power. Foucault himself, has advocated for this inversion when he asserted that we can use resistance, 'as a chemical catalyst, so as to bring to light power relations, locate their position, find out their points of application and methods used' (Foucault, 1982; 209-211).

Holland and Einwohner, point out that 'individuals can be powerful and powerless within different systems' (2004;548). Through Abu-Lughod's observations and analysis, it becomes clear that there are some perplexing systems of power and resistance within the context of the Bedouin women, which allows their power to be exercised through everyday forms of resistance. Abu-Lughod extends Foucault's concept of discourse to explain the social construction of emotion. Through, her examination of everyday and covert forms of resistance, an analytical mode of critical enquiry is revealed. One which makes aware of reductionist theories and approaches of power and resistance.

Abu-Lughod's Ethnographic fieldwork and theoretical thinking

Abu-Lughod, conducted her fieldwork in Egypt during the 1970's and has published several ethnographic materials. As this paper focuses specifically on her paper 'The Romance of resistance' as a reflective, ethnographic perspective this section will offer an insight into her ethnographic work amongst the Bedouin women.

It has become evident that; local communities are now being incorporated into modern states and integrated into a wider political economy. Abu-Lughod's interpretation of Foucault's theoretical conception of power, calls for an interpretation of resistance itself, as a diagnostic of power. In order to achieve, dual objectives of distinguishing different modes of resistance and describing more precisely those operations of power with which subjects were confronted and through which they were produced (Abu-Lughod, 1990; 40). Abu-Lughod, argues much like other resistance studies scholars, such as Scott that, resistance means seeing 'small acts' as cumulative and significant for social change (Abu-Lughod, 1990; 41-55; Scott, 1985).

Abu-Lughod offers a critique of past anthropological enquiries of resistance, as she notes that many do not go beyond heroic accounts of resistance to an analysis or examination of power itself. She also argues that there is a tendency, for scholars to, romanticize resistance which in turn does not

acknowledge the myriad of complex relations of domination and subordination, in which these acts of resistance are infused.

Through the romantization of resistance, it is falsely portrayed as an antithesis to power, rather than existing within and drawing from power. Instead, Abu-Lughod proposes that, any socio-political situation should be analyzed as a composite of various fields of overlapping and intersecting forms of subjection whose effects of particularly placed individuals at particular historical moments very tremendously. Moreover, it is observed that resistance may in fact 'run alongside the same tracks' of dominant systems (Abu-Lughod, 1990; 49-51).

As social, cultural and political subjects we all constituted in power. These multiple constitutions of power and subordination are often intertwined within many socially constructed spheres, which enable us to have multiple social statuses within the different spheres. Moreover, this then enables us to use our power in one sphere as a tool to generate a sense of power, through resistance in a sphere where one may feel subordinate and therefore powerless. This is seen most evidently within patriarchal societies, where women may not hold much power in certain socio-political spheres, but use their status as the caregiver to yield new kinds of power, for example through the use of traditional songs which are altered to portray women's discontent with their male family members or smoke in secret whilst using their influence on their children to have them as the look out.

Resistance practices amongst the Bedouin women

This section will, focus more specifically on the rich ethnographic analysis offered by Abu-lughod with regards to the forms of resistance that took place. The Bedouin women, often exercised the use of many traditional forms of social life to contest their position of subordination to the men within their group. This can be seen within four main forms, firstly living within a sexually segregated community, the women often found power through their resistance of male order, which we see through the minor defiance's that were often carried out. These everyday forms of resistance, were enacted through, hiding knowledge from men, such as secret trips to healers or friends or smoking in secret.

Secondly, their rejection of certain arranged marriages that they perceived to be an unfit match. Often mothers would delay their daughters arranged marriages, that had been organized and

chosen by their husbands, until they could convince their husbands that they were not a suitable match through persuasion (Abu-Lughod, 1990). Through the women's rejection of certain arranged marriages, it is evident that these women are not completely powerless or oppressed, but at the same time however much resistance they exercised, the final decision was left in the hands of the men.

Thirdly, the women would express happiness when men failed to live up to the ideals of masculinity and moral superiority and would you gossip with other women as a chance to poke fun of men's mishaps. Lastly, the most traditional of all the forms of resistance that the women and young girls enacted, was the use of songs and poetry. These poems/songs express their discontent with the sexually segregated and patriarchal society in which they live. Consequently, this act of everyday resistance can be viewed through a Foucauldian perspective as, violating the moral code of male superiority.

Another example of women using poetry and song as a form of resistance, can be seen within Raja's ethnographic study 'Women's submission and subversion in Hindu ritual' about women in South India. These ritualized forms of everyday resistance, are utilized to subvert their restrictions within their strict patriarchal society. Through the use of songs and poems which are passed onto the younger generation of women, warnings are given regarding the tribulations of marriage. This form of resistance is enacted, within the constraints of the power structures, but it simultaneously gives these women a sense of power from these restrictions, to draw on their own experiences to educate the younger generation. Foucault (1980; 1983) and along with Butler (1997) under his influence, have argued that this paradox of subjectivation, in which the process of subordination also acts as the means to which the subordinate resist, this then becomes the way they become a self-conscious agent.

As noted by Foucault, within society we may witness, multiple, conflicting and complex relationships of power. Thus, conceptualizing that power is in fact everywhere. The Bedouin women, illustrate their assertiveness and resistance, through taking advantage of the contradictions in their society (Abu-Lughod, 1990). As Foucault acknowledges and Abu-Lughod by influence, power is a major and influential source of conformity and social discipline. Following on from Foucault's previous assertion that power is everywhere and taking multiple forms, then we must infer, that resistance is then everywhere and exercised through the strategic use of multiple sources. Through Foucauldian analysis, anthropologists are challenged to understand power, freedom and subjectivity, in relation to one another.

What become clear towards the end of Abu-Lughod's fieldwork in Egypt, is the shifting discourse of the wider Egyptian society. Which has been heightened through the changing political economy. This is made explicit in her writing as she points to new forms of resistance and power that have come into play, following increased state influence on the Bedouin society. As a result, Bedouin women are now resisting traditions, through the possession of commercialized consumer goods, which are associated with westernized femininity. Thus, new forms of resistance are emerging, due to the introduction of local hierarchies and state power.

Due to the present generation of Bedouin, choosing to settle as opposed to remaining nomadic, they have now subject to more surveillance, than what they were once accustomed to when living in desert camps. This has in turn, increased the amount of time that the Bedouin women remained veiled, this is due in part by the state and religious ideologies that are embedded within the wider society, thus exposing them to new and more sanctioned and endorsed forms of power. Which have many different, systems by which they enact these laws and ideologies. Consequently, when looking at the work of Foucault, one can relate to this to his ideas of 'surveillance' from a societal and state context. As Foucault states, power can be accredited to be a major source and mechanism of social discipline and conformity (Foucault, 1991). Therefore, it can be viewed the reason as to why the Bedouin women are now spending more time veiled, can be associated with the new power forms of state, which create a sense of honor through conformity. As a result, we see individuals, starting to discipline themselves, through implementation and acceptance of social values and norms. Here we can see that, Abu-Lughod has taken on Foucault's perception of discourses and discursive formations, being historically situated, entangled with and produced by or through power. Thus, giving one an interesting perspective on the understanding of the social actors involved in this process and their ideologies.

Critical evaluation of using resistance as a diagnostic of power

In reflecting on Abu-Lughod's use of resistance as a diagnostic of power, the structures and strategies of power are revealed. This section will aim to critically evaluate the use of this theory and the influence of Foucault's work and theoretical thinking, within Abu-Lughod's own ethnographic analysis. Through this conceptualization one can conclude that, Bedouin women are perplexed by multiple power relations. Caught between the pursuit of attempts of liberation through modernization, nationalist rhetoric's of traditional ideology, religious doctrines related to Islam, and

the family. Thus, acknowledging the numerous gendered ideologies that are embedded within Egyptian society, and more specifically the Bedouin community.

These embedded gendered ideologies, which are evident in the Bedouin society and act as forms of power, for Foucault exerts influence on others and their actions (Foucault, 1982). As he states 'the exercise of power is not simply a relationship between partners, individuals or collective; it is a way in which certain actions modify others' (Foucault, 1982; 788). It is important that anthropologists undertaking a Foucauldian approach to ethnography, must trace the historical trajectories of forms of power and resistance. This is most evident, within Abu-Lughod's examination of the Bedouins forms of resistance and the power which governs their actions, as she traces the historical discourse surrounding the ideologies of male superiority and the power forms which have evolved through state and political economy influence. It is clear that, these influences transform and evolve with time, reacting against modern forms of resistance (Abu-Lughod, 1990).

Through Abu-Lughod's rejection of romanticized notions of resistance, she has made a conscious effort to shift her academic focus, moving away from resisters and the analysis of resistance practices, to the functioning of structures of power as a whole. In turn, gaining a more holistic perspective on the role of everyday resistance practices. Thus, attributing resistance as a diagnostic of power. The use of resistance as a diagnostic of power, according to Abu-Lughod, can help us to locate and understand better these historically evolved transformations of power, which consequently alter current sites of struggle (Abu-Lughod, 1990;48).

The interpretation of gender as a system of power, is one which has been influenced by Foucault's conception of power, which functions as a vehicle of production and regulation of life (Biopower) targeting individual bodies (Foucault, 1976). Consequently, many social and feminist anthropologists today, have begun to emphasize the need to historicize notions of the private and public discourses and process surrounding power and resistance, by linking them to their hierarchical nature and social relations in which they are embedded (Rosaldo, 1980)

Conclusion

In summary, the above examination of Abu-Lughod's ethnographic analysis of the Bedouin women's forms of resistance, have shown and reflected upon the influence that Foucault has had on Abu-Lughod's work. These influences, have stemmed from his analysis and theorization of power as an omnipresent entity, which is perplexed in multiple forms and spheres of socialization, society and state. Furthermore, Foucault's arguments surrounding the use of power to dissect forms of resistance, has been critiqued and reflected upon by Abu-lughod, he has instead in her work on

resistance, opted to invert Foucault's methodological framework and use resistance as a diagnostic of power. What has been most interesting, when examining the many actors and agents involved in this process of power transmission and resistance forms, is how they are both overlapping and entangled social spheres, transforming socio-historically. Thus, relationships of power are increasingly transforming in the wake of (or reaction against) modern forms of authority, as well as the familial ties. To conclude, the presence of these 'everyday' forms of resistance are indicative of the transformations of power and control.

When analyzing forms of resistance and the constitutions of power, it is hard to not, as well as problematic to romanticize the resisters and portray them as heroic, as Abu-Lughod has stressed in her work. Thus, when reflecting on her work and the influence that Foucault has had within Abu-Lughod's ethnographic enquires and theorization, this has been made clear. And as a result, the power structures have been illustrated more fruitfully, instead of reflecting solely on the specific forms of resistance. As we can see through the influence of Foucault on Abu-Lughod's work, his important conceptualizations on state power and productivity of discourse, has offered anthropologists a path away from top-down of power and state, instead shifting focus to new theoretical and ethnographic approaches (Koopman and Matza, 2013), centered often on a bottom-up approach. Whilst, resistance can often be portrayed as a form of political action, through reflection on Abu-Lughod's work, we may perceive resistance to also be a portrayal of identity (Ibid, 536-537).

What is also clear when reviewing Abu-Lughod's work is, her carefulness to not make critical remarks or assess too deeply Bedouin discourse or their practices. This, is a refreshing anthropological analysis of resistance, which sheds a large light on the power structures of the Bedouin society, whilst also illustrating the process and forms these take. As this paper has reflected on, through the use of resistance as a diagnostic of power, critical questions are reflected upon regarding the nature of the social order, along with the actors that maintain it. The influence of Foucault, through Abu-Lughod's work is clear, and the application of his ideas have not only enhanced understandings on his theory of power, but have added to them. As a result, giving us a more holistic and detailed account of the application process of Foucault's understanding of power. This has been achieved most successfully, and her work has now been a pioneering insight into the analysis of resistance and resistance studies. And how anthropological methods and theoretical conceptions can be utilized to further our understanding of the topic, whilst making sure one does not fall into the trap of romanticization.

Abu-Lughod's work, also importantly reminds us that, resistance is not always used as a vehicle of political action to overthrow dominant systems but can 'run along the same tracks' (Abu-Lughod, 1990; 49-51) as resistance can often be seen to exist within systems of power, thus is a limiting and may not work to overthrow the existing dominant ideologies and discourse surrounding them.

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