



'Look out for yourself'

Synopticism, Panopticism and Sexual Violence

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This paper develops insights from Mathiesen's work on the increasing prominence of synoptic power or 'the viewer society' (how the many come to 'see' the few) and feminist work on the social shaping of feminized subjectivity, sexual normativity and regulatory practice surrounding sexual violence. We critically explore the development and role of synoptic messaging via 'crime prevention' text, imagery and tutelage media aimed at tackling victimization from sexual violence. In this undertaking the paper makes a number of arguments. First, we demonstrate how synoptic power is shaped ideologically in relation to shaping common responses and understandings of 'the problem of sexual violence'. Second, the power of synoptic messaging - in the guise of 'protective policing' from sexual violence - prescribes a 'common sense' regarding women's risk, culpability and responsibility in terms of the their own victimhood (re. self-blame, self-surveillance and internalization). Third, as an individualizing and de-contextualizing form of power, synoptic messaging aimed at women and girls contributes to the ideological mystification of patriarchal power in general and male violence in particular. Fourthly, the problem of misrepresenting the problem of male violence through synoptic surveillance has served to recharge stereotypical assumptions concerning female 'victims' in the realms of public perception, the response of the criminal justice systems and the subjectivity of victims and survivors of sexual violence themselves. In conclusion we draw attention to ways in which synoptic messaging has been resisted or contested by in and outside of feminist campaigns.

5pm - 7pm

Wednesday 26th October

2011

Venue: 68 Hope Street, L1 9BZ

Attendance is free
No registration required

