

# Laudatio de Raewyn Connell com a doctora honoris causa,

per Maria Rodó, Joel Cantó,  
Shahrzad Goudarzi i Maria  
Martí

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## **Maria Rodó**

**B**on dia, good morning everyone.

It is my great honor to give today a laudatio for Professor Raewyn Connell, an exceptional scholar and social justice advocate. Her contributions to numerous fields of knowledge have impacted academia and society as a whole and it is a pleasure for me to contribute to this recognition.

Raewyn Connell, born in 1944, in Sydney, Australia, is a reference in the social sciences, as her work has transformed our understanding of gender, sexuality, and power dynamics. Professor Connell received her Ph.D. in sociology from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1975 and, since then, has held academic positions in several institutions. She has received numerous awards and honors for her academic contributions, is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia, a recipient of the American Sociological Association's award for distinguished contribution to the study of sex and gender, and of the Australian Sociological Association's award for distinguished service to sociology in her country. Moreover, she has also been recognized for her contributions to human rights, which shows her commitment to social justice and the transformative power of relating scholarship and activism for a common goal. Her trajectory, not only as a scholar but also as an activist and advisor to governments, shows how academic research can have a profound social impact.

Her outstanding research sheds light on how power relations operate within society, focusing on a variety of topics such as social class and inequalities, education, southern theory and gender studies.

She has since been best known for her social theory of gender. Specifically, her groundbreaking research on masculinity has been particularly influential in exposing how the dominant and privileged form of masculinity, what she identifies as hegemonic masculinity, is socially constructed and is sustained by a set of diverse institutions and social practices, intersecting with other forms of inequality.

In a current context characterized by the rise of anti-gender, racist, homophobic and transphobic discourses, recognizing, engaging and making visible Connell's research is a necessary endeavor. Her situated perspective shows us the need of contextualizing the process of knowledge production and her contributions on southern theory, specifically, challenge the dominance of Western and Eurocentric knowledge systems and seek to incorporate alternative perspectives from the Global South.

Acknowledging that diverse standpoints can offer valuable knowledge that may challenge current power relations is also a duty of neoliberal academic institutions such as universities nowadays, where they have a central role in sustaining and reinforcing current patriarchal, racist, and capitalist power structures through specific systems of knowledge production and transmission. However, these institutions can potentially contribute to social change as well with political commitment and engagement to the multiple processes of transformation that are also taking place.

In conclusion, Professor Connell is an inspiration, a scholar and activist whose work has been instrumental in reshaping our understanding of gender, power, and social justice and has also inspired countless others to work towards a more just society.

It is precisely because of this, and with great admiration, that we have decided to transform this laudatio into a collective praise given by members of GRETA, the recently created research group in the Department of Political and Social Sciences that aims at researching on gender and other forms of inequalities such as those related to sexual orientation, race, class, age, and language.

So, next, Shahrzad Goudarzi, Maria Martí and Joel Cantó will also share their perspectives on Professor Connell's work. Let me introduce them.

Dr. Shahrzad Goudarzi is a professor at the Department of Political and Social Sciences and studies the psychology of socio-economic inequalities. Maria Martí is an undergraduate student of Political Science and member of Time is Up, a students' association advocating for an intersectional and transinclusive feminism. And Joel Cantó, a PhD candidate at the University of Toronto and researcher at the Barcelona Centre for European Studies at UPF working on LGTB politics.

### **Shahrzad Goudarzi**

As a scholar of social inequality, it is my great pleasure to give a tribute on behalf of the GRETA research group to the amazing work and life of Dr. Raewyn Connell, whose enormous scholarly contributions span across many facets of injustice and oppression, not only as manifested in everyday life but also in the reproduction of power and knowledge in the academy.

Dr. Connell's work brings theory from the colonized margins to the imperial metropole, not just to challenge the orientalist views on southern societies, but also to call into question the dominance of northern perspective in social and political thought.

Her research on scholars from sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, Iran, and India, among others, reevaluates classical theories and uncovers the implicit northern positionality of in their conceptualization.

In the backdrop of an increasing tendency among Western academics to treat the Global South as a data mine to "prove" the theory conceived in the center, Dr. Connell's groundbreaking contribution envisions a [quote]"alternative knowledge structure," in which it is the subaltern that puts northern theories into a test.

Her perspective does not simply view Southern epistemologies as a rupture, disconnection, or refusal of Western theories, but rather conceives the two as in constant negotiation and tension in a dynamic, yet imbalanced, relationship.

Her work sheds light on the unequal division of labor and power structures that underpin and sustain the work of knowledge production. Employing transdisciplinary and multi-method approaches, Dr. Connell puts Southern thought in a dialogue with Northern sociologies of

knowledge to understand how academic practices are derived from historical, political, and material forces.

There is much to be praised about Dr. Connell's work on Southern theory. Put simply, Dr. Connell made visible the invisible, questioned the unquestionable, and in doing so laid bare the hidden hegemonic frameworks at play in the unequal ways that knowledge is acquired, controlled, and disseminated.

To me, the biggest inspiration from her massive oeuvre is her invitation to struggle for democratizing education, to fight for abolishing the colonial ways of pedagogy, and to reimagine how intellectual work is done. I am honored for the opportunity to speak these words in celebrating her emancipatory pioneering vision.

### **Maria Martí**

Professor Connell examines in her work the many implications that the educational system has for social justice. Therefore, in this part of the *laudatio*, I would like to concentrate on three topics that need to be taken into consideration if one has an interest in education and social justice, namely, education as a process, gender, and language.

Education is certainly a process. This is one of the great contributions that Dr Connell has made, and one with which I fully agree. The learning process has a starting point that is not the same for everyone. We do not start this process with the same initial conditions. Your gender, the place where you were born, your social status, among others... are all factors that condition how we learn.

As Prof. Connell contends, in this educational process, some groups gain privileges while others face many hardships or, in her own words, "are dealt heavy blows". We cannot leave behind the unprivileged and, therefore, we cannot stop seeking social justice within the process of learning.

Dr. Connell has also done extensive research on the effect of gender within this area of study. As students, we encounter numerous differences in the way we are treated in our day-to-day lives at the university. Such differences are clear evidence of discriminatory and feudal-like dynamics in the classroom. It is, therefore, important to promote a gender-sensitive dialogue in all areas of our university, where we can all contribute to the generation of knowledge and knowledge that considers everyone's experience.

Prof. Connell has also analyzed the functioning of schools and universities as massive and powerful social institutions in constant change. Thanks to her findings, we can see how the university revolves around how the conception of the knowledge creation process shifts and alters its preferences according to different changes. Thus, for example, the imposition of the English language on research and of Anglo-Saxon hegemony means that our universities are undergoing a transformation in which the learning process prevails over our own language and situated experiences. This leads to less diversity in research, thus making knowledge unidirectional, guided mostly or exclusively by the experiences of the Anglo-Saxon world.

Per tant, m'agradaria acabar aquest discurs amb català i agraint-li a la Professora Connell la seva aportació a l'acadèmia, ja que gràcies a referents com ella moltes ens podem sentir acompanyades en la lluita feminista i, també, amb la recerca del coneixement com a procés de la nostra pròpia emancipació.

## **Joel Cantó**

Dear honored guests, distinguished faculty, and fellow graduates at Pompeu Fabra University.

Today, we have the privilege of honoring Professor Raewyn Connell, who revolutionized the study of gender relations. Prof. Connell's pioneering work has shed light on the complexity and diversity of masculinities and their impact on individuals and society. She challenged the traditional notion of masculinity as a singular, monolithic concept and instead highlighted its multiple forms and patterns. As Prof. Connell herself stated, "anyone interested in power structures could see that the feminist challenge to patriarchy must mean changes in the lives of men." In other words, masculinity is a piece of the bigger jigsaw puzzle of gender relations. In this vein, Connell's seminal book "Masculinities" has been instrumental in shaping the field of masculinity studies via the introduction of the concept "hegemonic masculinity". By synthesizing ideas from psychoanalysis, feminist theory, gay theory, and structural sociology, she showed that masculinity exists in diverse forms, in a hierarchy between men. Even if men mostly rank above women, or above women in the same class context, there is also an important system of ranking between men, which is psychological and ideological as much as material or economic. The interaction of men with women, as well as with each other, their gender-related lifestyles, cultures, group formations and personal relations can be understood in terms of diverse patterns of 'masculinity' varying according to the specific context and the time.

Importantly, Connell's work has not only contributed to academic research but has also had public policy implications. Her advocacy for gender equality and the role of men and boys in creating positive social change has influenced public policy, including the United Nations' "Men and Boys" campaign.

Personally, I have been influenced by Connell's work in my Political Science research. Her contribution of masculinities being multiple, changing with time, and influenced by macro phenomena such as globalization has paved the way for my interest on intersectionality as a useful analytical framework to reassess the established literature on the ingroup and outgroup political behavior differences between and within men and women.

As we honor Connell today, let us reflect on the importance of her work as a pioneering effort to challenge traditional gender norms and create a more just and equitable society.

Thank you.

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