



**Department of Sociology
Faculty of Social Sciences
South Asian University**

Call for Papers

**Debating Identity:
Dialogues across Boundaries
(Conference for Young Scholars and Researchers)
16th and 17th October 2014; SAU, New Delhi**

Concept and background

“An entity without an identity cannot exist because it would be nothing”, declared Aristotle. Contemporary history is replete with assertions rooted in questions of identity and representation. Identity formation occurs in the context of one’s relative position within the larger frameworks of class, caste, citizenship, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, race and religious affiliation and so on. The location within these is often essentialised and further negotiated through social, political, economic and cultural processes. Also, other large-scale processes of industrialisation, migration and urbanisation guided by certain prototypes of development, especially in the contemporary discourses, lead to issues of acculturation and assimilation where new forms of self get created and included with pre-existing ones. This very idea of inclusion calls for deliberation on the notion of exclusion and question of identities that are alienated.

The first half of 20th century witnessed mass annihilation and destruction. Colonisation and the two World Wars were consummated through the construction of excluded identities. The pogroms for elimination of indigenous populations in Australia and Americas and genocide of Jews trace their lineage to the issue of identities. In the context of South Asia, the two partitions implicating India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, the civil unrest in Sri Lanka, the question of *Madheshis* and *Pahadis* in Nepal are not circuitously but directly linked to the issue of identity. If early 20th century was a struggle against colonialism, the latter part has been about struggles pertaining to identity formation and assertion of the Global South in the aftermath of colonialism and in the face of neo-liberalism. Neo-liberalism and globalization created new avenues identity formation and expression. Unprecedented changes have taken places in the realms of production and consumption; conspicuous consumption is on the rise thereby making it the new “opium of the masses”. Catchphrases such as ‘global village’ allude to a certain ‘global identity’. How are such identities constructed with respect to spatiality and temporality and how do they locate their subjectivities within larger frameworks? Further, in the present day ‘network society’, questions of manufactured identities in the wake of cybernetics and the biopolitics of biometric identity cannot be left aside. Thus, identity is not only a product of social processes but also an ingredient that goes into the making of these processes. Once created, identities are routinely maintained, altered and transformed over time. These transformations are set in intricate social, political and economic milieus.

Problematics pertaining to identity — ontological or epistemological are intricate, and therefore call for reflection and dialogue. Given these complexities, how does one engage with the category of identity? Do we start from the idea of the individual and the collective self and traverse across other zones of identity formation? What happens when multiple identities, coalesce, diverge and get juxtaposed as binaries? How do beings with several, coterminous identities view themselves within the larger structures they occupy? When we talk about binaries, are these felt binaries or are merely imposed upon by the observer? The category of identity is unproblematic; it is the *language* of identity that is problematic. This takes us to George Orwell words: “The worst thing one can do with words is to surrender to them”. Taking this spirit forward, we will engage with and problematize the language as well as categories and multiple expressions of identity and explore how identities in different contexts get mediated and negotiated in assorted multi-layered settings.

It is in the context outlined above that the Department of Sociology at South Asian University presents its first conference specifically for young scholars and researchers based on broad theme, ‘Debating Identity: Dialogues Across Boundaries.’

Eligibility

Papers are invited from candidates in MA and MPhil/PhD programs in social sciences and humanities at recognized universities and research organizations in South Asia. We also welcome contributions from individuals who are currently not enrolled in any university provided no more than one year has lapsed since their graduation with the last degree at the level of MA or above.

Conference sub-themes

Identity, self and subjectivity
Identity: Spatiality, Geography and Cartography
Identity, Migration and Displacement
Cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism
Poetry and the arts of resistance and assertion
Identity and changing epistemologies
Commodification and commercialization of Identity

Submission of guidelines

Initially, by **30th May 2014**, an abstract of no more than 500 words has to be forwarded by email as an attachment to: The Coordinator, Debating Identity: Dialogues across Boundaries, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, South Asian University, Akbar Bhawan, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi 110021, India. Email address: scholars-conf@soc.sau.ac.in

Authors of selected abstracts will be informed by email by **30th June 2014**, and complete papers have to be submitted for plagiarism review by **15th September 2014**.

Submission format

- Abstract: 500 words; font should be Calibri point 11; 1.5 line spacing; no references and no footnotes.
- Papers: no more than 7,000 words including footnotes and references; font should be Calibri point 11; 1.5 line spacing. For referencing and style guidelines please visit: <http://www.sau.ac.in/pdf/SAU-SOC-JournalStyleGuide.pdf>
- Abstracts and papers must be submitted as MS Word documents via email.
- The name of the file should be YourName_InstitutionAffiliation_DepartmentAffiliation.
- The subject of the email should be: SOC-FSS-SAU-Young Scholars and Researchers Conference.

Inquiries

All inquiries should be addressed to the Coordinator - Debating Identity: Dialogues across Boundaries: scholars-conf@soc.sau.ac.in