

# **A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE OF GENDER, METAPHORS, AND SPEECH ACTS IN ASIAN CULTURES**

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# ABSTRACT

- For this project I compiled literature reviews to support Professor Hillary Crane's research into Taiwanese Buddhist nuns' gender transformations. This literature covers several themes pertinent to that research including gender construction, the transformative nature of metaphor, and the potential role of speech acts in cultural change. The topics of gender, metaphors, and speech acts are all crucial components of Crane's research into Taiwanese Buddhist nuns' gender transformation and this poster presents some samples from the literatures on these topics—literature which sheds light on our understanding of how genders can be transcended or changed in other cultures.

# GENDER

- **Sex divisions are based on a person's biological makeup, whereas gender is a cultural construction based on biological bodies. This project focuses heavily on these notions of culturally constructed bodies.**
- **Examples of recent literature on the anthropology of gender:**
  - In some cultures, gender is quite malleable. Sex can be as well. Early Buddhism found that through karma a person could change their sex, so that everyone has lived as a woman or a man through reincarnation (Young 2007).
  - One way gender mediates all of our experiences is through assigned gender roles. According to Park (2005) different genders gives Korean Buddhists separate perspectives and experiences of modernization. Gender then helps open change for previously held beliefs of the Korean Buddhist social structure(Park 2005).
  - Examining Chinese gender and sexuality constructions, the article looks at how these two components communicate class distinctions in China's move from socialism to a more market society (Hanser 2005).

# METAPHORS

**Anthropologists analysis of metaphors describe metaphors in which the body represents society, create and enhance ascribed identities, and endeavor to enact social change.**

## **Metaphors of the body:**

- Body metaphors (including “clenched teeth” and disordered bodies”) and metaphors of agency (agency being the capacity for action and change) serve to create fear and modifying behavior toward social and academic success in northeastern India (Marrow).

## **Metaphors of Identity**

- In same-sex marriage court case arguments, metaphors of the body position advance legal arguments by position various participants as ‘winner’, ‘loser’, or bystander. One of the findings was of oral arguments in same-sex court cases over the right to legal marriages. (Deeb 2013).

## **Metaphors of change:**

- Ecuadorian prisoners use metaphors of self-sacrifice to navigate the authoritarian force within and outside of the prison (Garces 2010).

# SPEECH ACTS

A speech act is the performance of *doing* whatever is said to be done in the appropriate circumstances and settings (e.g. saying “I do” at the altar or breaking a bottle on the stem of a ship and saying “I name this ship X”) (Austin 1955).

**Some examples of speech acts from Chinese cultures include:**

- Naming practices in southern rural China where a man with more names is considered a man, becomes a man and shows his social being; a married woman with no names becomes female and therefore not as much as an autonomous person (Watson 1986).
- The Chinese online culture among youths in the mid-2000s show speech acts through the articulation of gender and sexuality, specifically of females. The female community perform female gendered acts when a girl is named ‘cute’ through these online interactions (Zitong 2013).

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