Gender

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Abstract: Research in the field of the sociology of gender includes theoretical, empirical, and practical studies and draws on the entire range of sociological methods and theories. This chapter reconstructs the more recent developments in the German-language sociology of gender along the lines of key issues—decentering, inequality and difference, intersectionality, care and precarization, and the body—and situates them in theoretical genealogies. Finally, we highlight current debates to outline avenues for future research.

Keywords: Gender, social theory, sexuality, social differences, care, intersectionality

1 Introduction

In 2019, forty years after the founding of the “Women’s Studies in Sociology” section in the German Sociological Association, gender studies are an integral part of sociological research and teaching. The sociology of gender includes theoretical, empirical, and practical (e.g., policy-oriented) approaches and draws on the entire range of sociological methods and theories. Being multidisciplinary by nature, sociological gender studies also bridges disciplinary boundaries. The sociology of gender is a constitutive element of the approximately 25 academic gender-studies programs (B.A./M.A.) at German universities, most of which take a multidisciplinary approach. Regardless of institution or location, all these programs basically list three aspects as their common denominator: apart from inter- and transdisciplinarity, these include “the ‘social category of gender’ as the label for their subject area and a critical stance (also towards scientific knowledge production)” (Oloff, Rozwandowicz, and Sackl-Sharif, 2018: 115; our emphasis). In the following, we will reconstruct the more recent developments in German-language sociology of gender along the lines of key issues: decentering, inequality and difference, intersectionality, care and precarization, and the body. Our closing outlook will also address current debates.

2 Decentering Gender

At first glance, the relatively pronounced sociological profile of multidisciplinary German-language gender studies seems in need of explanation since sociologists of gender had already raised doubts back in the 1990s as to whether “the gender dif-

Note: Translation from German, including all quotes from German literature, by Andrea Tönjes for *SocioTrans—Social Scientific Translation & Editing*.

ference does actually deserve—or still deserves—the status of a guiding difference” (Meuser, 1999: 151). The assumption was that the category of gender would become “obsolete” (Maihofer, 1995), as it was losing its “direct institutional basis” (Heintz and Nadai, 1998: 78). From today’s perspective, rather than heralding the end of sociological gender research, these positions were conveying a sociological insight: that we are dealing with empirical and structural asynchronicities between a gendered social structure, the institutionalized nature of gender relations, and the gender order on the one hand and the discursive-normative as well as individual praxeological level on the other. Angelika Wetterer (2003) referred to this as a shift in the “nexus between culture and structure,” for which she aptly coined the term “rhetorical modernization (289).” According to her, this structural distortion calls for including “various levels as well as various means of generating gender differences” in analysis.

In contrast to parts of the international research landscape, German-language sociology of gender of the 1970s and 1980s (which was then sociology of women and gender) was indeed characterized by its focus on studying the “relationality between gender groups” (Becker-Schmidt and Knapp, 2000) from a macrosociological and social-theory perspective. Over the course of 1990s, more emphasis was placed on issues such as internal differentiation among ‘women’ as a gender group (and later on, also among men and within other groups) and the relationship between gender and other categories of social inequality, while the focus was expanded by including the perspectives of microsociology, interaction theory, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, and social constructionism. During the last decade, this has been complemented by an intense debate over the ‘decentering’ of gender in light of complex structures. Approaches drawing on poststructuralism and performativity theory have gained significance, owing particularly to the reception of Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (1990). This is why today, subject, body, and identity as theoretical issues of *doing gender*—the interactive and practical construction of gender—have a greater influence on the field than macrosociological approaches, which have lost their paradigmatic prominence.

The volumes *Soziale Verortung der Geschlechter. Gesellschaftstheorie und feministische Kritik I* (2001; *Social Situatedness of the Genders. Social Theory and Feminist Critique I*) and *Achsen der Differenz. Gesellschaftstheorie und feministische Kritik II* (2003; *Axes of Difference. Social Theory and Feminist Critique II*), edited by Gudrun-Axeli Knapp and Angelika Wetterer, are exemplary of an approach that is still relevant in contemporary German-language sociology of gender: a combination of continuous (self-)reflection on analytical tools and analytical categories with a polyphonic conversation between the proponents of different perspectives and methods. The first volume (2001) had a socio-theoretical focus, as in Helga Krüger’s (2001) article on *Der Institutionenansatz in der Geschlechterforschung* (*The Institutional Approach in Gender Research*) or in Maria Mies’ (2001) text on *Hausfrauisierung, Globalisierung, Subsistenzperspektive* (*Housewifization, Globalization, Subsistence Perspective*). The articles in the second volume, *Achsen der Differenz* (2003), addressed positional differences among the gender group of ‘women’—for instance, the global connections between

gender relations and other forms of social structuration. Many of the volume's contributions came in response to the then-pressing question about "differences among women, that is, the social and cultural heterogeneity of the feminist reference subject" (Knapp and Wetterer, 2003: 8). We deem it proper to mention this here because the current buzzword *intersectionality* fails to acknowledge that addressing complex social structures (of difference and inequality) has a long tradition in German-language gender sociology and that these issues have been investigated in many and varied ways both in the German-speaking world and internationally.

3 Inequality and Difference

The pluralism of methods and theories that has characterized German-language sociology of gender over the past 20 years emerged in reaction to the aforementioned specific historical changes in society, namely, the disjunction of cultural and structural development. This forced scholars to re-confront the substantial question regarding the relationship "between difference and hierarchy within and between the genders" (Riegraf, 2009: 67). The reason for this is rooted in the nature of functionally differentiated, geographically mobile, post-traditional societies that discursively associate social positions with individual (in-)aptitude rather than with structures of inequality and seem to have no fixed social order (Schwinn, SOCIAL INEQUALITIES—THEORETICAL FOCUS, this volume). Societies of this kind render it increasingly difficult to make definite statements about the shape and structure of social conditions, dynamics, and inequalities, including those pertaining to gender relations. In her study *Soziale Ungleichheit und Geschlecht* (2000; *Social Inequality and Gender*), Karin Gottschall systematically reconstructed and compared the theoretical concepts underlying women's studies and feminist and sociological discourses in West Germany and stated that "today, social inequality in the Federal Republic [of Germany; our insertion] has many faces" (2000: 11). And indeed, phenomena such as changes in women's and men's economic-activity rates, the reorganization and dismantling of the welfare state, increasing migration (including economic migration), women's increasing participation in education and training, the pluralization of 'private' lifestyles and living arrangements, as well as political struggles over what counts as inequality in the first place indicate that we are dealing with historically changing, complex conditions (of inequality).

Scholars in the sociology of gender have expanded their theoretical and methodological toolbox—also in reaction to epistemological criticism from within and outside over the actual subject of the (partly feminist) discourse in their field. About whom, on behalf of whom, and to whom is the sociology of gender speaking? The field responded by engaging in an intense and still ongoing debate: Which social positions and lifeworlds are taken seriously and which ones are neglected? Whose social experiences are deemed empirically relevant and theoretically worthwhile? If it is true that social conditions and relationships are becoming more confusing also at the

global level and if, for instance, women of certain social strata and classes achieve their gains in equality by reallocating “housework to other women as precarious wage labor and shadow work” (Knapp, 2009: 316), analysis along the lines of gender sociology and a feminist critique of social conditions must focus on the “interferences between gender relations and other relations of power, hegemony, inequality, and difference in the context of globally changing conditions and balances of power” (Knapp, 2013: 108). In other words, gender needs to be researched in specific contexts and in conjunction with other structurally relevant differences such as class, sexuality, ‘race,’ age, or geopolitical position.

4 Intersectionality

The insight that the category of ‘gender’ alone *cannot* account for women’s living conditions was not new in German-language sociology of gender around the year 2000.¹ However, it was only in the wake of American jurist Kimberlé Crenshaw’s (1989) considerations on the intersections of race and sex that the international and German-language sociology of gender alike increasingly began to focus on intersectional concepts that allow us to grasp the connections between multidimensional systems of division and domination and the various ways in which they are intertwined.

In the German-speaking academic world, the concept of intersectionality met an internationally oriented discourse that was debating issues of class, gender, and ethnicity from the angle of macrosociology and social theory (e.g., Lenz, 1995). In the 2000s, the intense reception among German-speaking sociologists of gender (see, Dölling and Krais, 1997; Bock, Dölling, and Krais, 2007) of Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology of inequality—especially with its simultaneous emphasis on a critique of domination and on everyday aesthetics—provided a major impetus that reoriented German-language sociology of gender toward multidimensional analyses. This proved highly productive and yielded concepts such as that of interferences (Müller, 2003), of interdependencies (Walgenbach et al., 2007), or that of overlapping- and crosscuttingness (*Überkreuzungen*) (Klinger and Knapp, 2008).

1 The ‘Bielefeld subsistence approach’ (Mies, Bennholdt, von Werhof) had addressed the interlaced nature of gendered and capitalist divisions of labor in a global perspective as early as the 1980s. Also in the 1980s, it was mainly Christina Thürmer-Rohr who introduced the concept of ‘complicity’ into the feminist debate in reaction to “defining all women as collective victims” (Thürmer-Rohr, 2004: 85), seeking to acknowledge the different positioning of women in relationships of power and subordination that are, at the same time, capitalist, colonial, and gendered. The nexus of ‘gender and class’ was highlighted most notably by Regina Becker-Schmidt and her Hanover colleagues (Becker-Schmidt et al., 1982; 1983; 1984; Becker-Schmidt, 1987) as well as by Ursula Beer (1984; 1990). Their analyses were fairly similar to comparable studies in the sociology of gender published in the English-speaking world around that time.

Intersectionality is a contested concept still today—and the debates are as interesting as they are symptomatic of the state of our society: Is intersectionality limited to making reference to diversity in its market-compatible form, with an eye to its potential for generating surplus? Is it (merely) about identity and subjective experience? Does this mean that race, class, gender, sexuality, and physical ability are individually obtainable markers of identity that call for optimization and render all of us ‘different’? Or does intersectionality offer a—more or less new—perspective for sociology to address, also critically, the historically evolved, institutionally established, and subjectively experienced structures of inequality? In short, is intersectionality more than a “buzzword” (Davis, 2013)?

The volume *Intersektionalität. Bewegungen und Verortungen eines vielschichtigen Konzepts* (*Intersectionality. Developments, and Situatedness of a Multi-Faceted Concept*), edited by Helma Lutz, Maria Teresa Herrera Vivar, and Linda Supik in 2013, elaborates on this question with the proper empirical, theoretical, and regional nuances. The book includes articles on topics such as masculinity in the context of economic precarization (Bereswill), sexuality as a dimension of intersectional social relations (Kosnick), or on the body as a dimension for intersectional sociology between specific practices and objectified structures (Villa). It also illustrates the extent to which the debate on intersectionality in German-language sociology has been shaped by the discipline’s macrosociological background, especially when compared to the US, where issues like representation, identity, and culture have played a more significant role in gender studies, also historically.

5 Critique of the Private: Care and Precarization

Just as intersectionality was not an entirely new concept in the early 2000s, the endeavor of rethinking privacy did not constitute a particularly unique desideratum in the sociology of gender—even though ‘the woman’ and her experiences of love, living, and family along with the routines and problems associated with these aspects of life had come under the scrutiny of sociology fairly late. Feminist and other new social movements addressed the political, historically evolved, normatively permeated, and media-mediated quality of the private sphere, family and love, sexuality and friendships, as well as tastes in music and fashion (see, e.g., Lenz, 2008). As a result of converging political and social-scientific attention, German-language sociology started addressing these issues in the 1970s. However, the discipline’s canonized mainstream has tended to reject this new field of study and relegate it to the realm of ‘particularity.’ Still today, much of German-language and international sociology share the assumption that ‘gender’ refers to the feminine and hence to the particular and, when in doubt, also constitutes a dispensable aspect of the general in the social.

Yet, according to Karin Jurczyk and Mechthild Oechsle’s volume *Das Private neu denken* (2008; *Rethinking the Private*), there were “good reasons (...) for reflecting on the private sphere anew” (2008: 8) at the end of the 2000s. These reasons were the

then “current changes” (ibid.: 26ff.) in the social fabric, which gave rise to a “new blurring and shifting of boundaries” (ibid.: 26) between public and private. The gendered spheres of work and family were significantly affected by the “structural changes in employment” (ibid.) in the form of a radical subjectification of labor, by the digitally catalyzed blurring of spatial and temporal boundaries, as well as by the work- and market-induced intensification of demands on mobility and flexibility. The “integration of women in gainful work” (Jurczyk and Oechsle, 2008: 28), which had already been established in the eastern part of Germany at the beginning of the 21st century and was also on the rise in the western part during this time, required reorganizing the private and public dimensions of the social: Do we need to rethink ‘family’ entirely in view of the increasing inclusion of women in employment and in light of digital lifeworlds? And do we therefore also need to reconceptualize and reinvestigate it from a sociological perspective? As is typical of the sociology of gender, the contributors to *Das Private neu denken* answer with a clear “yes, but” to the questions raised by the specific empirical constellations in which the inertia of traditions and innovation dynamics find expression. The strengths of this volume thus lie in the theoretical as well as empirical acknowledgement of the ambivalences and paradoxical nexus of gender relations. It investigates the (a-)synchronicity of inertia and persistence, the erosion of traditional interpretations and structures, as well as emerging new developments in the economy, politics, media, and so forth from a sociological perspective—for instance, by analyzing the routines of everyday life, domestic violence, household-related services, care relations, and so on. Exploring the changing gender arrangements between private and public, between market/gainful work and love/family has resulted in two strands of research, which have left a productive imprint on the field of gender sociology: one focuses on investigating care while the other analyzes the dynamics of precarization, for example, with regard to gainful work, the future, identity and belonging, gender, and institutions and markets.

The plethora of contributions on the dynamics of precarization offered by the sociology of gender is summarized in Mona Motakef’s introductory book *Prekarisierung* (2015; *Precarization*). This slim yet substantial volume is interesting not least because it successfully manages to ‘mainstream’ gender into sociology. Motakef uses the example of gender to demonstrate that precarization creates structurally induced uncertainty that permeates all social spheres and defines our present time not only in the Global South but also in the Global North. The book not only illustrates the general through the particular, it also argues that if we want to formulate general diagnoses with respect to social change, we cannot be silent about gender. This, of course, also holds true the other way around: if we want to research gender dynamics and constellations in a sociologically sound manner, we cannot disregard structural—that is, economic and socio-political—dynamics, which have always been ‘intersectional’ in the first place. “In a globally and historically extended perspective, the phase that has been labeled Fordist, during which the standard employment relationship and standard family were considered the norm, marks an exception, whereas precarious work and living conditions have always been and continue to be the rule in capitalist forms

of sociation” (Motakef, 2015: 10). Motakef also uses this insight to argue that the intersectional and (gender-)sociological gaze helps us recognize to what extent the research on precarization, for instance, is itself a “locus of struggles over hegemony in defining what has been, is, and will be precarious” (ibid.). This approach takes inequality, discrimination, identity, and the body as seriously as the ethical implications of precarization.

Bringing together sociological research on care and on gender in an intersectional perspective remains one of the busiest empirical ‘construction sites’ in gender studies (Pfau-Effinger/Grages, SOCIAL POLICY, this volume). Here, care is, roughly speaking, understood as attending to the needs of all that is alive, in other words, all activities required to tend to, preserve, restore, sustain, and enable living. An example of this is the special volume *Gender and Care* of the German-language journal *Gender* (Riegraf et al., 2011). It analyzes the ‘neglect’ and devaluation of care activities in capitalism from a structural and socially critical perspective, depicts the historically evolved feminization of this (reproduction) sphere (Becker-Schmidt, 2011: 9), interprets empirical findings on gendered “divisions of labor in families” (Flaake, 2011) by drawing on psychoanalysis, and analyzes “care networks between private support, social services, and welfare-state provisions” (Brückner, 2011) at the meso level. The issue of care has now become a key focus in German-language gender sociology and gender studies. This is well in line with international research in this field, although contributions from the English-speaking world in particular are more strongly informed by philosophical and ethical considerations (cf. Tronto, 1994, and later editions; for an overview, see Norlock, 2019).

Helma Lutz systematically expands the sociological perspective on gender and care in her book *Vom Weltmarkt in den Privathaushalt. Die neuen Dienstmädchen im Zeitalter der Globalisierung* (2007; *From the Global Market into the Private Household. New Housemaids in the Age of Globalization*) by also considering transnational linkages (including the dynamics of ethnification and racialization from an intersectional point of view). The volume presents the findings of a qualitative study on migrant ‘housemaids’ working in German households. They were asked about their identity as workers, their transnational conduct of life, and the networks they use to this end, as well as about their self- and social perception. What makes the study particularly instructive is that it interviewed not only the housemaids themselves but also their employers, who were members of the educated upper middle-class. The study is groundbreaking in reconstructing the negotiation processes taking place in the private sphere: work, relationships, intimacy, emotions, legal issues, money/economy, global connections, and so on are constantly (re-)negotiated in the detailed context of daily housework. The complex (i.e., intersectional) social positions (e.g., ethnicity) of the persons involved play a crucial role in this process, as they simultaneously construct these positions while engaging in these activities. The study is a brilliant demonstration of how one can explore the situational dynamics of construction processes in conjunction with complex global structures in order to derive rich sociological analyses (Weiß, GLOBALIZATION AND TRANSNATIONALIZATION, this volume).

6 Body Constructions

A fourth important topic area in German-language sociology of gender is the ontology of gender and the precarity of its scientific-biologistic foundations (Villa, 2014). During the 1980s and 1990s, the vast insights gained from empirical work, for instance, by ethnomethodologists in the line of Goffman (cf. Gildemeister, 2010), were complemented by studies on gender employing a history- or sociology-of-science perspective and by studies from the natural sciences. This research was formative in understanding how strongly the nature of gender difference is in fact the result of continuous social processes of naturalization: as an “ongoing accomplishment” (West and Fenstermaker, 1995) and as acts of *doing gender* in everyday life, which feed on ideologically underpinned—evidently simplistic—notions of the biology of gender. Following this line of reasoning, the debate in the 1990s was marked by challenging the differentiation between sex and gender, both epistemologically and from a discourse-theory perspective. This was particularly in response to Butler’s work, which rendered reflexive the ontology of sex and was received controversially, for instance, from the perspective of the phenomenology of the felt body as discussed in the sociology of the body (Lindemann, 1993; Villa, 1999). In the 2000s, gender studies ‘normalized’ by empirically analyzing specific practices and constellations of constructing the body.

Nina Degele’s study *Sich schön machen. Zur Soziologie von Geschlecht und Schönheitshandeln* (2004, *Beautifying Oneself. The Sociology of Gender and Doing Beauty*) is paradigmatic of this German-language debate and exemplary in applying the (self-)reflexive program of a sociology of gender. This qualitative study addresses the everyday understanding of beauty practices, which sociology conceptualizes as *beautification*. Despite its relatively simple design based on group discussions, the study is quite complex as it selected the participating groups along the lines of various structural differences: sexuality, age, gender, and occupation were the relevant criteria of difference. What becomes obvious is that, rather than being a self-satisfying private pleasure (as the commonly prevailing narrative would make us believe), personal beautification actually represents an “ideology of doing beauty as a private act” (Degele, 2004: 90). Identifying subjective motives such as wellbeing, personal taste, self-determination, and inner satisfaction marks an intermediate step, not the end point, of this empirical reconstruction. Degele’s qualitative-hermeneutic approach provides an in-depth analysis of these narratives and not only reveals the extent to which embodying the “ideology of fun” (ibid.: 123) involves hard work on the part of those working in the beauty industry but also the great degree to which beautification is of significance to the work situation of those seeking it: in the world of work, body constructions are needed to accentuate masculinities and femininities effectively and, to the utmost possible extent, successfully—and in ways that are in line with the market and the social norms of competition and optimization. Ostensible individualized “beautification” (Degele, 2004: 118) is in fact socially normed “body-

fication,” and the daily practice of doing beauty invariably also implies doing gender through doing body. What the study further shows in an exemplary manner is that bodies are not extra-social, ahistorical entities but are shaped and rendered relevant in accordance with social imperatives that become efficacious, both literally and proverbially, behind people’s backs (Gugutzer/Peter, (FELT) BODY, SPORTS, MEDICINE, AND MEDIA, this volume). The less they are subjected to open debate, the more efficacious they are. What the study fails to consider systematically, however, is acting persons and thus agency and practice itself. Even though texts, such as empirical transcripts or sociological analyses, are not taken to represent the full empirical picture, it is nevertheless the proverbial text and not the acting bodies that are being studied. In this sense, too, Degele’s study is symptomatic of those strands of German-language sociology of gender that engage in empirical research on social constructions of gender by focusing on discourses, knowledge, and interpretations while turning a blind eye to the actual doing and the inherent logic therein.

This limitation has been reinforced by the extensive reception of the work of Pierre Bourdieu, who conceptualized bodies as an “embodiment” (Bourdieu, 2001: 65) of social orders of domination (ibid.: 30ff.), as a habitualized bodily *hexis*. In particular, he sociologized gendered bodies as a naturalizing somatization of discursive norms of gender difference. Binaries that manifest themselves in specific activities such as fetching water, doing housework, eating, and so forth are the normative texture of embodiment and become somatized also—and especially so—through sexuality. In the context of a binary gender order, the “phallic erection” (ibid.: 13) particularly “helps transmute the arbitrary of the social *nomos* into a necessity of nature (*physis*)” (ibid.). Such a close link between sexuality and politics has rarely been established even by feminist-activist authors—and sociologists of gender are definitely careful to avoid it. From a sociology-of-gender perspective, naturalization processes and their somatic side should rather be seen as multidimensional systems of mediation. The reason for this is that as plausible as Bourdieu’s analyses of the naturalization discourse and the resulting imperatives of social embodiment are, and as much as they accord with studies from the sociology and history of science on the ‘production’ of the modern gendered body, his fixation on this normative concept leads him to neglect the inherent logic of the somatic, of the felt body, and of the variety of bodily *practices* embedded therein. It is these practices from which gender, undoubtedly socially and historically constituted, draws its vitality. The study *Sexy Bodies* (Villa, 2011) seeks to discuss these different dimensions in their inherent logic and engage them in dialogue. Numerous studies in the sociology of gender have since tried to avoid reducing bodies—or more precisely, somatic and felt-body dynamics—to ‘discourse’ (as we can observe in some post-structuralist works) by drawing on the phenomenology of the felt body as well as on praxeological approaches in a differentiated manner. This specific accentuation has in turn contributed significantly to refining the post-structuralist concept of performativity employed by those working along the lines of Butler.

7 Outlook

Since being established in the late 18th century, bourgeois gender relations have undergone repeated transformations along legal, political, cultural, and material lines. The referential connection between the symbolic gender order and the gendered social fabric is different today from what it was during the early days of bourgeois, capitalist modernity. The fundamental, specifically modern form of gender relations, however, seems to have survived bourgeois society's various transformations. This applies particularly to the asymmetrical relationship between the two gender groups of men and women, to their being assigned, in principle, to two separate spheres in society (the private household and the world of work), as well as to the key parameters of modern gender relations: the gendered division of labor and androcentrism, masculine domination and heteronormativity. All this raises two fundamental questions that will continue to preoccupy sociological gender research for some time to come: How can we *today* conceptualize this figuration that is marked by asynchronicity? How does the ensemble of institutional arrangements, empirical practices, and normative programs associated with "organized modernity" (Wagner, 1995) amalgamate with that of contemporary late-modern society?

Generally speaking, the question is whether the twofold dynamics of male individualization and female familialization—for two centuries the driving forces of Western modernity—have not only become precarious but have actually been disrupted in the course of the transformation from a provisional to an activating welfare state and the associated rise of the *adult-worker* model. Have hitherto valid, conceptual dichotomies such as reproduction and transformation or change and persistence perhaps exhausted their potential for describing social gender dynamics? Do the organizational principles that once guided the gendered division of labor during the first two centuries of modernity no longer apply, or are they merely exposed to greater friction? How does the structural change in society correspond with processes of subjectification and the constitution of subjectivity, and with the emergence of agency and relationships? How gendered—or not—are, for example, "doing family" (Jurczyk, Lange, and Thiessen, 2014) and "doing care" (Zerle, 2011)? Recent studies on couples have revealed that, while patterns of gainful work are indeed changing significantly, traditional patterns of gendering still prevail in the private sphere (Koppetsch and Speck, 2015; Wimbauer, 2012). It is here that the everyday reality of partnership and housework brings the asynchronicities in the edifice of gender and society to light.

Moreover, the incorporation of social reproduction into value-added that coincides with the increasing commodification of female labor fundamentally changes the conditions under which people can care for themselves and for others. This structurally generated scarcity turns doing generativity and care into an ideologically and emotionally charged social conflict. In these debates, however—at least in those outside gender research and feminist politics—the structural context of gender and society remains largely hidden, to the benefit of individualized imperatives of self-

management ('work–life balance'). This, in turn, must be subjected to critical (as well as self-critical) scrutiny in gender sociology and gender studies since the vocabulary of market-oriented gender equality and diversity policies has indeed originated in the field of gender research ('gender mainstreaming').

In view of increasing transnational ties, we finally also need to identify the contemporary globalized manifestations of gender relations, including their racialized, heteronormative, and class-based articulations. Can we still today continue to conceive of gender relations—as a nexus between symbolic order and social fabric—within the confines of the nation state? How would we have to conceptualize them within the context of a world society instead?

To analyze current dynamics, the sociology of gender needs to thoroughly reflect on whether to understand these dynamics as 'shifts' or 'asynchronicities,' as 'contradictions' between economic structure and cultural lifestyle or as 'paradoxes' of capitalist ways of life. The choice of terminology is relevant not least with regard to how the sociology of gender will conceive of and investigate the somatic and affective integration of systemic imperatives, processes of gendered and gendering socialization, and the praxeology of gendering. In short, the sociology of gender too revolves around the fundamental question at the heart of sociology: what are the links between structure, action, and subjectivity?

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