



PALGRAVE STUDIES ON NORBERT ELIAS

Dynamics of Gender Relations

Process-Sociological Perspectives

Edited by
Stefanie Ernst
Valerie Dahl
Marta Bucholc

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Palgrave Studies on Norbert Elias

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Despite growing, widespread appreciation for Norbert Elias's theoretical approach—often called figurational or processual sociology—there exist only a few, specialized publications on Eliasian social theory, and as of yet, no academic book series.

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Stefanie Ernst • Valerie Dahl
Marta Bucholc
Editors

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CHAPTER 1

Gender Dynamics. An Introduction to Norbert Elias's Process-Sociological Approach to Gender Relations

Stefanie Ernst, Valerie Dahl, and Marta Bucholc

*This particular problem, important as it is, must be
left aside for the time being.*

*Its elucidation demands a description and an exact analysis of the
changes which the structure of the family and the whole relationship of
the sexes have undergone in the course of Western history.*

*It demands, furthermore, a general study of changes in the upbringing
of children and the development of adolescents.*

Elias (2012a [1939], p. 597)

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1 INTRODUCTION¹

Countless discussions, conferences, and papers have dealt with Elias most popular book “On the Process of Civilization” (Elias, 2012a [1939]). Over the over eighty years since its publication, one missing link was a conference and a book on gender and process theory. However, not only the small footnote in the chapter on shame and repugnance that we have chosen as our motto must have been overlooked for a long time, as well as the whole field of process sociology of gender relations studied in long-term historical perspective. Since in Elias’s oeuvre power is neither set absolutely, nor is it just political, there are plenty connecting points to analyse the “structural peculiarity of all human and thus public as well as private relationships that are changeable” (Ernst, 1996, pp. 26–40).

The connection between gender and the power relations has been addressed in many variants of gender and women’s studies (Davis et al., 2006; Kortendiek et al., 2019; Jackson, 2014). Indeed, the problem of power is central particularly to feminist theory: feminist philosophers like Judith Butler (2006), Nancy Fraser (1989), or Iris Marion Young (1990) have shed light on various aspects of gender identity formation, gender inequality, and gender conflict on the one hand, stressing the performative effects of social structures and norms, the contingency of gender-based domination, and the need for empowerment of the weaker by way of social critique. However, the unique feature of Eliasian theory, which is constantly making the connection between psychogenesis and sociogenesis, between habitus formation, state building, and power struggles binding the interactional micro-perspective with a long-term historical macroanalysis, has taken a long time to find its way into Gender Studies.

Even since the late 1980s, when Elias’s seminal insights into gender relations slowly began to grow into a subfield of figurational research with the works of, for example, van Daalen (1988), de Regt (1984), Klein (1992), and Treibel (1993), gender balances and imbalances somehow remained a secondary subject. On the one hand, it was in line with the general penchant of the so-called second wave of historical sociology (Adams et al., 2005), which was highly concerned with states, revolutions, class struggles, and economic processes, and less so with the subtler structures of social differentiation embedded in the apparently perennial

¹ Core ideas in this introduction come from Ernst’s German text about Elias and Gender Research (2019).

habitual patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting. Elias as a historical sociologist is, indeed, between the waves: he combines the attention to “big structures, large processes and huge comparisons” (Tilly, 1984) with a minute sense of the historical contingency of the seemingly mundane and self-explanatory orders of everyday life. Perhaps it is no wonder that, now that the third wave of historical sociology is on the rise in many regions of the world from which the authors of this book come, Eliasian gender sociology has finally come to the point where it can be presented to the global audience as a comprehensive, multifaceted intellectual enterprise.

Having been toying with this idea for a long time, the idea of this volume emerged at the latest when Stefanie Ernst, whose process theoretical framework bundles together the research on work, organization, and Gender Studies for years (Ernst, 1996, 2003, 2019), participated in a conference at the *German Historical Institute* (DHI) in Paris in January 2022. After the long period of pandemic-induced lockdowns, academic conference life finally took on an analogous form again. Discussions at the lunch table and later in digital continuation of Stefanie’s international colloquium expressed the need to finally focus on the gender-related research paired with the figurational approach. Co-editors were quickly found: Valerie Dahl, researching woman in physics and the bystander phenomenon (2021), and Marta Bucholc, whose work on process sociology has for many years now focused on sociology of law and national habitus (2011, 2024). Together, we have decided to put our plans into action during the 2022 Amsterdam conference commemorating Johan Goudsblom, an eminent Dutch scholar who was instrumental in promoting long-term historical process approach in sociology. It was in many ways symbolic and a next step of a beginning institutionalization, as it was the first Norbert Elias Foundation conference in many years including a separate session dedicated to gender relation. Therefore, the Amsterdam conference in 2022 was making a 25+ years coming link to the first such event ever, which was the 1995 conference “Civilisation of the female Ego” (Klein & Liebsch, 1997) at the University of Hamburg.

When working on this collection from our different perspectives, the three of us discovered that many colleagues all over the world have been using Eliasian insights and concepts to study gender relations for a long time without most of them, with a few significant exceptions, ever being bundled together. Therefore, it is a task long overdue not only in terms of trajectories of sociological theorizing, but also in terms of the economy of academic knowledge production and institutionalization to assemble

gender and process-sociological research, to demonstrate its polyvalence, its diversity, and its explanatory power. This is the aim of the present volume.

On the one hand, the book documents further development of process-oriented gender research with a focus on the present time, in which gender often seems to be relativized as but one more human category of socio-cultural differentiation. On the other hand, it recapitulates gender-related texts written or inspired by Norbert Elias, starting with early works that he supervised in Frankfurt. This book shows for the first time the entire oeuvre of extensive archival research conducted over many years in many private collections as well as in the Elias archive deposited in the *German Literature Archive* (Deutsches Literaturarchiv—DLA) at Marbach am Neckar, Germany. This historical part shows the origins of the figurational sociology of gender, shedding light on its genesis and early thematic array. Thus, we find one more reason to explicitly show the immense importance of the category gender, because whether and however (de-) constructed or not: gender really matters in the working world, in family life, in education, in politics etc., and there are no signs of it losing importance.

To analyse gender relations in their progressive and regressive mutability as a product of interdependent long-term developments of society is relatively seldom in sociology. Elias's figuration and process theory with its relational concept of power offers not only valuable contributions to explicate the dimension of a sociology of gender implicit in it. Moreover, the relational, comparative, long-, middle-, and even short-term analysis of the complex and dynamic socio- and psychogenesis of human gender orders that distinguishes between involvement and detachment can thus close a long overdue research gap.

1.1 *Process-Sociology's Reception in Early Women's Studies*

Although widely received into the circle of "classic sociological texts", Norbert Elias's two-volume book "The Civilizing Process" and related figurational concepts such as the power balance or his take on game models were only hesitantly adopted by Gender Studies. This long-lasting "reception barrier to figuration theory (...) is more than a mere 'taste barrier' directed against the sound of Elias' texts" (Treibel, 2012, p. 97, also Treibel in this book). Early women's studies in particular, and to some extent also current Gender Studies, had or still have difficulties with the

reception of Elias's relational thinking. This is actually surprising, because both his gender sociological approach and the figurational concept of power (balances) can bring in "ideal author(s) for gender theory" (Treibel, 1997, p. 308). For example, historians like Hausen (1976) introduced the concept of "gender character" to analyse an essential polarity of men's and women's worlds in the development of bourgeois societies, whereas Frevert (1995), Frevert et al. (2011) implicitly works with Eliasian ideas reconstructing historical and modern gender differences also in view of its affective elements. Other early feminist studies with their traditional critique of the state, violence, and power focused on the blind spots of process theory and reconstructed the genesis of the dichotomous gender order. Like other theories, figurational and process-sociological theory has not only been accused of ignoring patriarchal, structural violence against women but also of being gender-blind in overseeing decivilizing behaviour. By only describing the "phenomenology of male behaviour" which is constructed differently from women and, moreover, "acts of war [...] appear almost exclusively as male actions", Elias was argued to have overlooked both female complicity and the "failed civilization of men" (Gravenhorst, 1996, pp. 170–172; see also Dekker; Hadas; Dunning et al. and MacIntosh and Hughes in this book).

Elias's relational idea was not particularly attractive for the first or second generation of women researchers who struggled for recognition and autonomy in academic life. Gendered power structures in the academia, in the West as elsewhere, have been a projection of the power balances in broader figurations, in which women consistently occupied subordinate positions. Women had and still have to fight for control over their lives, their minds, and their bodies, for political participation, for reproductive rights, divorce, or equal pay. Men have ever been the dominant force, and gender relations have long been construed in binary terms reflecting this power differential ranging across the figurations, with men and women as complementary, opposite, and competing categories. As a result, the gradual nuances and interactions between men and women in the process of civilization next to the spurts and regressions of power had easily been overlooked at that time. Figurational analysis was instrumental in offering a more reality-congruent view which remained, nonetheless, profoundly critical. A deeper topical examination of the figurational and process-sociological approach against the background of gender relations initially took place in the scholarly vicinity of Elias's students mostly in the Netherlands, Belgium, France, and

Germany. Meanwhile the range of process- and figuration-theoretical gender research has developed enormously: Whether it is the “History of Civilization of Dance” (Klein, 1992), the analysis of the sociology of knowledge and power in the academic establishment (Treibel, 1993; Dahl, 2021, also in this book), equality policies in relationships and organizations (Treibel, 1997), or marriage and family in the process of civilization (Ernst, 1996) as well as the gender, stereotype and leadership posts (Ernst, 1999, 2003). More explicitly, with the works of Brinkgreve (1999), de Regt (1984), van Daalen (1988), and Wouters (2004), Dutch figural sociologists analysed the interplay of cultural imaginaries and social change in view of sports, partnership ideals, and homosexuality (Van Stolk & Wouters, 1983). Femininities and masculinities were increasingly analysed as plural phenomena, for example, in sports (Liston, 2005) and youth development (Goodwin & O’Connor, 2015).

1.2 *Figurational Gender Studies: State of the Art*

Nowadays process-sociological gender research draws on the original Eliasian inspirations while exploring new research fields. Topics are, among others, power relations between the sexes in general (Ernst, 1996; Treibel, 2009), in sports (Liston, 2005; Klein, 1992), or in “sport-related fitness activities” (Mansfield, 2008), as well as the exploration of power relations between the sexes in business, public, and private life (Ernst, 2003, 2022; Dahl, 2021). And recently, the question was raised what “makes it easier for women to engage in strategies of coping with oppression on institutional, symbolic and proxemic level?” (Bucholc, 2011, p. 425). This now broadly accepted approach is thus applied internationally to various fields of gender research. Contemporary gender conflicts are rather asymmetrical and ambiguous and can therefore be connected especially for process-sociological approaches (Treibel, 2012, p. 88). The more complex game and Janus-face of modern gender relationships can thus be reconstructed in many of the described research fields over the medium and long term. Here, gendered outsiders still struggle for equality in many spheres.

More recently, we have witnessed a rise in process-sociological research in (critical) men’s and masculinities studies (Dunning et al.; Dekker; Kossakowski and Szlendak; Gospodarczyk; Hadas in this book). Polish and French researchers apply figural studies to the control of the female body, for example, by abortion policy, birth, or beauty ideals (Bucholc, 2011; Memmi, 2021; Tillich in this book). Controversial issues

(such as #MeToo and sexism) imply a double-bind effect that is remarkable in terms of knowledge and sociology (Delmotte, 2019). The “transformation of sexual impulses” (Elias, 2012a, p. 459) and the related development of shame and embarrassment are currently particularly explosive topics as well (Klein & Liebsch, 2001; Wouters & Dunning, 2019). Contrary to this elaborated process-sociological gender research, today’s focus of gender research has changed, insofar as most of *deconstructive Gender Studies* surprisingly still reveals a “peculiar indifference” (Klein & Liebsch, 1997, p. 16) towards process and civilization theory.

While Elias’s focus on binary gender construction was criticized in the course of contemporary debates (for an overview, see Ernst, 2003, 2019; Dunning & Hughes, 2013), a closer look at his oeuvre reveals potential for a more differentiated discussion of gender relations in his writing. Figurational thinking is about power, not about essences of social groups and identities. As Marta Bucholtz and Marta Gospodarczyk recently wrote (2024, p. 146):

[To focus on the power differentials between men and women] does not presage any social ontology based on an assumption that there can be no more than two genders, or that the division into (cis)men and (cis)women is the only sociologically relevant one. In fact, exactly the opposite is true: Eliasian analysis of gender as a figurational group characteristic paves way for a useful application of the notion of gender spectrum in studying the effect of gender differences beyond the binary on social inequality and exclusion.

In fact, the assumption that gender relations change over time implies the need to perceive men and women as dynamic social labels which are also subject to change, since all social identity is relational. That said, scientific study of social identities and the consequences of their emergence and rise usually lags behind reality. Figurational theory is only now entering the phase of more intensive engagement with multiple gender identities and non-binary gender relations as a conceptual challenge. Therefore, the focus on men and women in this book is not to preclude any other view of gender relations such as they have or may yet emerge and, more importantly, as figurational theory comes to be applied to the study of societies and communities whose gender categories, divisions, and gender power differentials may diverge from those observed in the West. In fact, there are already many harbingers of this happening. The application of Elias’s conceptual framework to the study of historical processes involving

LGBTIQ+ people became a feature of figurational sociology early on in the 1980s. Since then, a number of works have explored inequalities and power differentials, as well as the processes of exclusion and inclusion of sexual and gender minorities from the figurational perspective (see, e.g. Bagiński, 2024; Bucholc, 2022; Bybee, 2005; Moore, 2010; Ernst in this book).

1.3 *Foundation of a Theory: Norbert Elias Meets Gender Studies*

The common theme of gender-oriented process-sociological approaches consists in exploring gender relations or interdependencies including the perspective of power and power balances. Process-oriented approaches investigate how these power balances are particularly pronounced in certain social processes and contexts (Klein & Liebsch, 2001, pp. 233–239). In this socio-historical context, power is not set absolutely or just operating in the political system. Being a structural peculiarity of all human relations power characterizes public as well as private relationships and is changeable (Ernst, 1996, pp. 26–31). According to Elias, those who are supposedly *superior* in power also depend on those who are *inferior* in power, resulting in a double-bind between individuals and social groups:

We depend on others; others depend on us. In so far as we are more dependent on others than they are on us, more directed by others than they are by us, they have power over us, whether we have become dependent on them by their use of naked force or by our need to be loved, money, healing, status, a career, or simply for excitement. (Elias, 2012b, p. 93)

The gradual transformation of close-meshed external constraints into self-constraints mentioned in “The Civilizing Process” is not linear but thereby “accompanied by numerous setbacks” (Treibel, 2009, p. 143) and points to the fact that under the surface of civilized behaviour, intrusions are possible at any time. In differentiated societies the

external control is founded on the assumption that every individual is himself or herself regulating his or her behaviour with the utmost exactitude in accordance with the necessities of this network. [...] A constant and highly differentiated regulation of one’s own behaviour is needed for individuals to steer their way through traffic. If the strain of such constant self-control

becomes too much for an individual, this is enough to put him or her, and others, in mortal danger. (Elias, 2012a, p. 406f.)

Therefore, Elias's approach can not only "contribute to making the desideratum of a power theory of the sexes more concrete" (Treibel, 1997, p. 313). The specific orientation of gender relations can be understood even more as a specific product of civilizational development. Power as a structural characteristic of social relationships can preferably be transferred to gender relations (Ernst, 1996; Treibel, 1997, 2012; Hammer, 1997; Klein & Liebsch, 2001). It expresses itself in a variety of ways and is not statically attributed to just one side or the other. However, on the one hand the gender struggle between men and women differs from other conflicts as women's struggle for social equality had started from a relatively outsider position being excluded or marginalized from central resources of power. See, for example, the world of leadership in organizations, where "gender seems to be one of the main dividing and conflicting factors in organizational life" (Ernst, 2003, p. 280). Here, process-theory helps to re-embed the research question in a long-term perspective. Then we realize that although women had been excluded since centuries from the top of these organizations, they are "actors not victims in this unequal balance of power. To understand women's leadership role in the workplace, one [therefore] has to analyse not only gender relations in business life as a whole, but also the long-term processes of exclusion and inclusion. This demands a reconstruction of the long-term process of civilization between men and women. It also means analysing to what extent this implies a change of the power balance in the spheres of organizational life" (Ernst, 2003, p. 279).

On the other hand, men and women are very dependent on each other as individuals as well as social groups (Elias, 2009a, p. 272). Therefore, process-theory is interested in the transformation and dynamics of changes in power relations. Concerning business life, science, or politics, therefore, we can "argue that women in leadership positions have started the process of transition from being outsiders in the scientific and business world to moving towards being established in certain leadership posts" (Ernst, 2003, p. 282).

Throughout his work, Elias consistently stated that gender relations are dynamic, standing for the microcosms of social figurations in general. In his chapter on "shame and repugnance" (Elias, 2012a, pp. 457–463) from "The Civilizing Process", for example, he especially states that the

“transformation of sexual impulses and an advance of shame feelings in the relations of men and women” (Elias, 2012a, p. 459) remains to be shown (Ernst, 1996). He also thought about the idea of “patriarchy” (the supremacy of the fathers) which was intended to capture the traditional male dominance and also to name it in its changeability. As a counter-concept to it, Elias introduced the concept of “andrarchy” in his unpublished manuscripts. Unfortunately, this proposal could not prevail in the gender debate (Klein & Liebsch, 2001, p. 241). Elias himself, on the other hand, was not only impressed by the feminist debates; moreover, in relation to other sociological classics, he very early reflected that a long-term perspective is needed to analyse the civilizational history of family and gender. Besides selected notes found in the *German Literature Archive* (Deutsches Literaturarchiv—DLA), his paper on marriage in ancient Rome, several forewords and passages in the collected works, Elias mostly described the direction of changing gender relations as a process of decreasing power inequalities in favour of women and as wider egalization.

Elias’s essay “The changing balance of power between the sexes” is one of the few original and published writings (see Egen et al. in this book) in which Elias addresses gender dynamics directly, here on the basis of the ancient Roman state. He states that, at least in the long run, the normative diction of physical dominance ideally is weakening and the principle of negotiation between the sexes is increasing. Different spheres of power are thus differentiated, so that “the chains mediating between the legal system and the power structure have today grown longer, in keeping with the greater complexity of society” (Elias, 2012a, p. 266). The different civilization curves of the sexes are not characterized by gradual degradation or progress but by a peculiar ‘more’ or ‘less’ (Elias, 2009c, p. 241). Another theme of this essay is the connection of violence² against women and the laws that enforce it:

In Roman society unmarried women, from early days onwards, were passive objects of a violent act or of a transaction between males of different kin-groups. But in time there occurred a significant change, perhaps after a period of transition. The rough warrior nobles of the earlier Roman period were transformed, thanks to the booty of successful wars and the exploitation

² Especially the topic of violence, diverse forms of masculinities and the rejection of gender equality will be dealt with by Dunning et al., Baginski and Delmotte in this book.

of subjugated peoples, into a small immensely wealthy aristocratic oligarchy that ruled a vast and still expanding empire. (Elias, 2009c, p. 244)

Over time and by changes in law, women became more equal in marriage and relationships in general and thereby, society “reached, over the generations, a higher level of civilisation” (Elias, 2009c, p. 244). It is therefore not surprising that Elias also revisits gender relations and their inherent hierarchies in further essays, albeit sporadically. In his writings on “Some remarks on the problems of work” (Elias, 2009b, p. 234), he refers to work as the main ranking mechanism of people in modern societies (see Brinkgreve & van Daalen; Dahl; Ernst; Kunze in this book). Elias also gives a gendered dimension to these topos, illustrating the dependency of women on working spouses, especially in sole-breadwinner-scenarios:

People’s job, or in some cases at least the occupational work done by the male part of the population, in our type of society to a large extend determines the position of a person or a family in the status hierarchy. (Elias, 2009b, p. 234)

The progressive process of civilization (between the sexes) is also evident in the way people treat each other in both public and private spaces (see Ernst, 2022; Kibel et al.; Gospodarczyk in this book). Especially aspects of (enacting) human sexuality were gradually moved from the public to the private sphere; here, too, Elias observes a processual course of action, talking about an “unarticulated shame among adults concerning their own sexuality” (Elias, 2008a, p. 19):

Particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but also before that, among adults human sexuality was increasingly placed behind the scenes of social life. The growing reserve that adults had to impose on interactions with each other became internalised—it became a self-constraint, and also rose like an invisible wall between parents and children. (Elias, 2008a, p. 19)

But not only acts of a sexual nature, but also ordinary everyday practices and actions cannot escape a hierarchization of gender and gender-specific body policies and perceptions (see Wouters; Memmi; Tillich; Connolly in this book), Elias continues in his essay “*L’espace privé*” (2008b):

But in many societies, privatisation not only of the bodily functions but of the body goes so far that any visibility of the body, apart from hands and head, is felt to be shameful, and usually considerably more shameful for women than for men. Note how selective our concept of nakedness is in this regard. (Elias, 2008b, p. 50)

In short, Elias makes clear in his work, albeit in scattered places, that the “particular problem” (Elias, 2012a, p. 497) of gender inequality not only had—and often still has—a strong one-sided focus, but was long overlooked (Ernst, 1996). However, it is both a misconception that power is only ever experienced one-sidedly as superior or inferior and that human beings can live like a “homo clausus” insulated from social structures: For him, the battle of the sexes is different, but:

[w]hat we witness today is quite decidedly a phase in a long-drawn-out power struggle between two different social groups which has some similarity with other power struggles between social groups within a state, and which at the same time also in specific ways differs from other struggles of this kind. In common with many other power struggles, this is a struggle for greater social equality between groups, one of which—women—has in many respects had an outsider position: its members traditionally have been excluded from many social positions monopolised by the other group. At the same time, these groups are dependent on each other in a way no other established and outsider group in society are dependent on each other. (Elias, 2009a, p. 272)

With Elias’s concept of people and the dynamics of social figurations, “neither a ‘naturally’ civilized female ego—in opposition to the male ego—nor a uniform form of civilization to the female ego can be found” (Klein & Liebsch, 1997, p. 28). Rather, the universal sociality of human beings shows that the naturalization of dual genders, analogous to the rationalization of behaviour, can be read as a specific stage and process. It becomes clear that the process-book and the figurational approach is thus widely recognized and used as a thoroughly constructive basis not only for the history of the “civilization of the female ego” (Klein & Liebsch, 1997). Therefore, we as editors think it is time to systematically address the interwoven genesis of the interdependent gender order and gendered forms of civilization to innovate this field with our collection. It documents the next step of further research in gender dynamics and process theory.

1.4 *From Ancient Rome to the Incels: An Overview of the Volume*

In summary, on the one hand Elias's texts remain ambivalent, display several missing links, and sometimes also follow stereotypical ideas prevalent at the time when they were written. On the other, they are open-ended and suggestive of theoretical elaboration, expansion, and correction guided by new social sensitivities and research agendas. In the first section about *Gender Equality and Process Theory*, the reader can find articles that apply selected Eliasian thoughts on gender equality from the first generation of scholars working with his theory, like Christien Brinkgreve, Rineke van Daalen, and Annette Treibel. *Annette Treibel* focusses on ambivalences in the civilization process of the sexes arguing that figuration theory can analyse changes on the microlevel of private and everyday life but needs to be better developed for the study of continuous discrimination, sexism, and violence as the other side of the coin of increased egalitarian structures. *Christien Brinkgreve* and *Rineke van Daalen* unfold the intensified ambiguities and ambivalent phenomenon in the process of increased equality with diminishing contrasts between the sexes. They make it clear that next to continuous structural barriers men and women still struggle with their gendered heritage of internalized gender roles. Moving on to the next section about *Body and Soul*, the reader finds the contributions by Cas Wouters, Dominique Memmi, and Emma Tillich as well as Pawel Bagiński. This section develops the socio- and psychogenetic dimensions of civilizational processes and their gender impact by focusing on two basic concepts: the "integration of sexualisation and erotization since 1880" by *Cas Wouters* and the concept of "close domination" by *Dominique Memmi* as a key to analyse long-term gender relations. Dominique Memmi discusses two regimes of feminine self-control embedded in the process of civilization: the rationalization of biology as, to speak with Cas Wouters, a second nature and a "controlled decontrolling of emotional controls" forming nowadays transformation towards a "third nature".

Emma Tillich's work in this context applies this hidden aspect of informalization theory on biological aspects in the debate of maternity. She studies counselling literature since the 1960s and shows in how far procreative women's self-control cumulates especially in constraints on motherhood. *Pawel Bagiński's* paper deals with the discourse about the concept of sexual harassment in Poland in family life, at the workplace, and in

public life. Hereby the floor is prepared for another essential missing link of process theory: the structural barriers of equalization processes in organizational life. This important but missing meso-link in Elias's oeuvre is picked up by *Stefanie Ernst* with her paper on inherent logics of organization, whereas *Valerie Dahl* draws attention to the situation of men and women in physics. With Goffman's theatre metaphor and Wouters's theory of (in-)formalization in mind, Stefanie Ernst analyses the front and backstage life of public services that have to implement gender equality and diversity politics. She asks for the ambivalences and embeddedness of semantic and organizational changes from gender equality towards diversity politics. Focussing on the opac socio- and psychogenetic aspects of this complex new power play she finds an increased and elaborated gender and diversity knowledge as a result of transformed organizations and processes of informalization empowering social climbers since the 1980s on the one hand; on the other structural conservative organizations through these transformations cause considerable dynamics between intended formal innovations and unplanned side effects in the complex power play of organizational culture. *Valerie Dahl* also uses material from a case study about organizational dynamics between "gendered established-outsider relations" in academia, especially physics. It becomes evident that besides increased social equality between the sexes in physics men still tend to devalue female physicists, which proofs the figurational group dynamics of *praise gossip* and *blame gossip* in this arena.

Moving on to the next section about *Private and Public Spaces*, the first article deals with a case study about Germany. *Jan-Peter Kunze* reconstructs the shifts in the power balances between the sexes concerning empirical data of social-structure analysis. Between 1945 and 2000, there are specific interrelations between the educational and labour market system and income as well as social habitus. *Marta Gospodarczyk* then follows with another case study about the rural and urban division of masculinities in nowadays Poland. In this doctoral research, she positions rural men as outsiders in contrast to urban men as the established and more powerful group in an intra-gender figuration. Focussing on selected political leaders in Poland, she pleads for a relational perspective in the discourse on masculinity. This dimension of local spaces will be extended by the shift towards global spaces as well as comparative figurational theory in the next example about the "gendered nature of the household division of labour" in Germany and Kenya. Moreover, with illustrations from architectural and spatial figurational sociology, *Jochen Kibel*, *Makau Kitata*, and *Nina*

Baur reconstruct the German bourgeois household images and gendered arenas in comparison to Kenyan ones. This important link towards “socio-spatial and material practices” is kept up by *John Connolly* who closes this section with a case study of one of the most important and symbolic public spaces in everyday leisure time: the Irish pub. He shows the increased equality between the sexes in Irish drinking culture since the 1900s. Here, several movements forward and backward reflect power struggles over the social spaces that men and women share and over which they contend.

Formal and legal rights are an important source for more equality in the power structures between the sexes. Therefore, the next session on *Violence and Law* in relation to gender should not be missed. *Florence Delmotte's* article underlines the linkage between male domination and women's emancipation based on transformed sensibilities on the one hand and the critical discussion of the role of state, law, and rights on the other. Gendered aspects are not only underdeveloped in Elias's work but also an important aspect of control agents in the *Process of Civilization* par excellence. In how far Dutch feminism is declining is the moving question in *Mischa Dekker's* work: the Netherlands has been one of the strongest gender egalitarian cultures in Europe with an institutionalized feminism. But the public discourses have changed towards more gender-neutral approaches causing the disappearance of gender-based violence from the public awareness. Here, Elias's and Wouters's theory of informalization helps to understand a specific apprehension of moralizing sexual discrimination.

With this view towards central challenges of full gender equality we enter the penultimate section of our book focussing the other side of the gendered coin: masculinities. *Miklós Hadas* continues the perspective of Dutch gender-culture and reconstructs the long-term changes in Dutch and European aristocratic dispositions. Symbolic practices of distinction show that the lengthening of the chains of interdependencies conditioned the different dispositions of nowadays plural masculinities. This approach is also the starting point for *Radosław Kossakowski* and *Tomasz Szlendak* who add the history of Polish masculinity from the court society up to noble men and soldiers as role models for today's Polish men. They argue that the Western concept of hegemonic masculinity does not fit Polish realities all too well, mostly due to the role of victimhood in the construction of masculinity in the Polish culture that continued well into the Communist era ended in 1989. This brings us to the backward movements in gender equality empowered by antifeminist men's groups

occurring in online spaces like so-called incels. *Michael Dunning*, *Matthew Hart*, and *Georgia Marfob-Hoare* discuss nowadays misogyny and violence, that is, another missing research link about the development of long-term social processes concerning misogynistic rhetoric. Referring especially on the work of Elias and Wouters, the authors try to set out key social processes to contribute to the emergence of this group and the problems associated with it.

Next, *Matt MacIntosh*, *Jason Hughes*, and *Kahryn Hughes* discuss the utility of the concept of hypermasculinity for studies of gender and power relations focussing on the tandem sociogenetic ascendancy of so-called hypermasculine attributes and hypermasculine attributions. With an array of historical sources from American history between 1890–1933 and 1933–1945 (and after) they embed their provisional thoughts into socio- and psychogenetic (rising and falling levels of fear) processes of civilization.

Finally, the last section assembles texts from the *German Literature Archive* (Deutsches Literaturarchiv—DLA) about the genesis of gender-related themes that had been developed under Elias's supervision at his time at the *Frankfurt Institute of Sociology* until 1933 and those that Elias wrote himself. In this closing section, *Adrian Jitschin* and *Marion Keller* studied the doctoral thesis on the society of actors by Ilse Seglow. She was one of Elias's female doctoral students and a member of the first generation of figurational sociologists. This paper gives a captivating impression of the preliminary status of the figurative research program in Frankfurt am Main before exile. *Christoph Egen*, *Hans-Peter Waldbhoff*, and *Kathrin Wahnschaffe-Waldbhoff* report on their archival studies. They draw attention to Elias's unpublished thoughts on gender relations beside his famous paper on gender relations in Ancient Rome. Since Elias dealt with this topic especially in his later years, this contribution will describe and explain the changes in the balance of power between the sexes in his unpublished works.

1.5 *A Glimpse in the Future of Process-Sociological Gender Studies*

This first collection of international gender-related figuration theory brings together three generations, intellectual more than biographical, in the discontinuous chain of process sociologists. Christien Brinkgreve, Rineke van Daalen, Dominique Memmi, Annette Treibel, and Cas

Wouters, who paved the way for systematic application of process sociology to gender relations, were followed by the next, middle generation, who were and are still working to lay foundation for gender-theoretical and empirical figuration research in their specific fields. Today, the third generation is well under way, a numerous and diverse one, reflecting the growth of gender problematic in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, but also the richness of theoretical and philosophical inspirations from which it draws. If this volume is anything to go by—and we very much hope it is—current process-oriented Gender Studies seem to be in a very good shape, and well-adapted to face the challenges of the age. They are informed by the theoretical insights that seem to have withstood the test of time quite well compared to some other sociological classics: the constant need critically to engage with Elias's insights on gender relations bears testimony to their intellectual appeal, but also to their academic productivity.

But process-oriented, figurational Gender Studies go beyond further exploring Eliasian motives: they reconnoitre their own, new fields, following the new political, cultural, and economic realities. They are however, in many ways, very true to their common base. Process-oriented, figurational Gender Studies are firm in their commitment to historical orientation, though it may take various turns in particular research designs. They tend to be interdisciplinary and to bring various methodologies from, among other things, history, sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies, to address the difficult task of capturing social process in long-term perspective (Baur & Ernst, 2011). They are open-ended and inclusive, as far from any theoretical dogma as they are from methodological exclusivism. They also are invariably critical of societies and powers that be, today or in the past, and they are sensitive to any form of violence that the powerful use to stabilize the power differentials by which they benefit.

What future lies ahead of process-oriented, figurational Gender Studies? We expect it to include even more excellent empirical analyses such as those included in this volume. Apart from the well-established research subjects such as family life, gendered role models and ideals, and their impact on sexual relations, much remains to be done in studying broader figurational effects of gender inequalities. Research on the presence of women and of gender and sexual minorities in politics, business, economy, arts, and civil societies would stand to gain a lot by applying figurational sociology. However, figurational sociology would also stand to gain much by expanding its research agenda. Gender Studies may be instrumental in

bringing this about insofar as it is providing a powerful impulse for revision and innovation coming with insights into spheres of social life, cultural universes, historical paths and geographic areas absent in the foundational works of figurational sociology.

The first and crucial desideratum for the future would be more studies not coming from Western Europe or the Anglo-Saxon world, so from beyond the so-called West or Global South. While both concepts have been intensely disputed and should not be seen as referring to some fixed essentialized entities, they nonetheless serve the goal of problematizing and situating knowledge production, and we use them to this purpose, while remaining faithful to our commitment to contextual and historical understanding of the origins of figurational theory. In this volume, we have made a move beyond the traditional geographic core of figurational sociology, offering comparative studies focusing using data from East Central Europe and Africa. However, figurational gender sociology beyond the Western core seems to be gaining momentum in the Global South rather more slowly than figurational sociology of politics, state, or migration, or studies of diverse forms of inequalities and discrimination in which gender, sex, and sexuality may be one of the intersectional factors, but do not play the main role. What is needed is more diversity of empirical material and more confrontation with data on gender relations that do not follow the Western model or that have been forced to follow it as a result of colonization or authoritarianism, and may diverge from it as a result of decolonization and interplay of indigenous cultures with colonial violence and exploitation, and post-colonial dependence.

We are confident that the increase in the number of scholars using figurational theory in gender studies will contribute to fine-tuning of this theoretical paradigm to the challenges of societies that are in many material respects different from those which provided an impulse for Elias's own theorizing in the first half of the twentieth century. We believe that the established-outsider model, which features in many chapters in this volume, can become a vehicle of increasing the connectivity of figurational Gender Studies both to other paradigms within the Gender Studies and to other areas of research. The heuristic of established and outsiders is particularly well-suited to demonstrate the advantages of the sensitivity to situatedness and positionality of social actors. Therefore, the hope of a meaningful historical and intercultural comparison (which is the basic tenet of figurational sociology) has not to be abandoned. We hope to see more longitudinal, diachronic, and comparative studies to complete the

growing array of case studies of single societies. This would mean a huge step forward for the process-oriented, figurational Gender Studies.

Let us give but three examples of the direction which such new studies characterized by high interdisciplinary and comparative connectivity could take, tackling topics that are important today and that could only be projected back to a certain extent, to a time that had a different horizon of experience than either today or tomorrow. One domain which is blatantly understudied are gender relations in institutionalized religion, in the Global North and beyond, including traditional and indigenous religions. Lack of interest in gender and religion viewed through the figurational lens is probably a far-reaching consequence of the limited interest in religion and religious institutions in Elias's writings combined with a very different context in which religion was studied by the social sciences, but it calls for a remedy. Another under-researched field is the presence of women and gender and sexual minorities in military and warfare, sadly an increasingly topical issue in the second decade of twenty-first century, and one calling out loud for comparative historical imagination. In both institutionalized religion and the military, the intersection of power and violence, education and training, and ostentatious habitus formation should provide an excellent ground on which to vet, refine, and amend Elias's theoretical insights. Finally, in sociology of law, figurational approach to gender, especially using the established-outsiders model, can profitably complement and enhance the achievements of scholars approaching the problem of law and intersectional violence differently, as seminally shown for international relations and human rights by Andrew Linklater (see e.g. [2020](#)), and for sexual and reproductive rights by Bucholc ([2024](#)). However, much more work is needed to explore the potential for incorporating the figurational concept of gender in sociology of law.

We are confident that we will see those and many other developments in the years to come. With this volume, we invite our readers to reflect on the gender relations in a way that we believe is highly relatable. By bringing up this first review of the state of research, that is bound to be incomplete, yet it is the most comprehensive ever, we hope to initiate exchange that will make it easier for us to chase the gendered myth of domination, subjugation, superiority, and inferiority more efficiently—wherever and whenever we encounter them.

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Balances of Power: Gender Relations in Figurational Sociology

Annette Treibel

1 INTRODUCTION: FIGURATIONAL SOCIOLOGY—TOO 'WELL-BEHAVED' FOR GENDER STUDIES?

Norbert Elias struggled for resonance throughout his life (1897–1990). Today he is widely recognized as a classic of sociology. Thirty years after Elias's death, the figuration and process theory he founded has asserted itself in a variety of sociological contexts.¹ In *one* context, however, it asserts itself only conditionally: For *gender theory*, as far as Elias is concerned, there is still a reception gap today that was already worth sociological analysis as such. I will discuss some of the perception gaps and their causes in the course of my contribution—one of them should be addressed

¹Cf. Ernst (2010, pp. 162–185), Giddens and Sutton (2017), Kahlert (2009), Korte (2017), Neckel et al. (2010), Rosa et al. (2018), Treibel (2009), Schroer (2017), Thorpe (2016).

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here: Probably for many gender researchers the *sound* is not right. For quite obviously figuration theory is not a critical-radical² but a reformist-liberal social theory. In the following, I am concerned with the hitherto unexploited potential of this theory, which, in my opinion, exists above all in one respect: The figuration and process theory helps to better understand the ‘quite normal’ gender relations—in this respect, a ‘well-behaved’ theory then also attains its place in a gender-reflexive social theory.

If one wants to reduce figuration and process theory to the denominator of *one* basic sociological concept, this is the concept of *power*: “Power is not an amulet possessed by one person and not by another; it is a structural characteristic of human relationships—of *all* human relationships” (Elias, 2012, p. 74). Power is not accessible per se, and not only to particularly *powerful* people such as government or corporate leaders, whom everyday understanding associates with power. According to Elias, even those otherwise described as powerless have power, or more precisely: for them there is a possibility of exercising power. Power relations can be found at the *micro* level, for example, between parents and children, and at the *macro* level between states, for example, between the German Empire and its neighboring states in the years leading up to World War I, as Elias explored in *Studies on the Germans* (Elias, 2005). The gain of power (in Elias’s sense better: the disposal of more means of power) for one side inevitably results in a loss of power (the disposal of fewer means of power) for the other side. How both will behave is unpredictable, but figuration and process sociologists see the conflicts that accompany this change as completely normal. In this respect, figuration and process theory, which emerged following Elias, can be described as a “theory of power relations” (Treibel, 2009, p. 156).

To look at the gender relation following Elias means to make *one* fundamental setting already at the beginning: One deals primarily with the *relationship*, that is, the relations of men and women, and less with the two genus groups per se. A ‘women’s’ or ‘men’s’ research does not represent an adequate approach from such a point of view. The focus is not on one group or the other, but on the *relationship*, on the tensions, on the mutual

²Cf. the important distinction between ‘critical theory’, understood in the German-language discussion as synonymous with the Frankfurt School and its successors, and social-critical approaches understood in a broader sense as ‘critical theory’, as is common in the Anglo-American world (cf. Gertenbach & Rosa, 2009, p. 251). I refer here to the second meaning.

attraction between women and men: “It resists figuration sociological thinking to analyze only one-sidedly the lives of women. Rather, it calls for focusing on the relationship between women and men” (Klein & Liebsch, 1997, p. 35, own translation:).

My questions are as follows:

- What can be said ‘with Elias’ about contemporary gender relations?
- In what ways do analyses of gender issues from figuration sociology contribute to broader diagnoses of time?
- Where are the limits and where are the potentials of figuration sociology for a gender-reflexive social theory?

By way of introduction, it should be noted that in the following, *gender relations* are mostly understood as heterosexual relationships. However, the transfer of gender research to same-sex or transsexual relationships is obvious, especially in the figuration sociology (cf. Sect. 1.2.2).

1.1 *Power Balances Between Men and Women*

When looking at social groups, to examine women without men or men without women would be like describing a soccer game by looking at only *one* team. The central term for this permanent interrelation is figuration. *Figuration* refers to the interconnectedness of participants in a dynamic process (Elias, 2006, pp. 100–117; Treibel, 2008; Schroer, 2017). Gender relations are an almost prototypical figuration for Elias himself (cf. Sect. 1.2.1) and thus also for figuration sociology (cf. Sect. 1.2.2). Women and men are mutually related to each other: The two genus groups—more generally, gendered groups—can sometimes live poorly *with* each other, but *hardly without* each other. Their interdependence is particularly great. In this respect, the change of precisely this figuration is exciting to observe.

1.1.1 *Elias on the Change of Gender Configuration*

With his key concept of *balance* of power, Elias specifies the basic sociological idea of dynamic power relations. Not even ‘power-holders’ hold their power unrestricted, but even they, who have more resources than others, have to defend their position. To do so, it is necessary to contain opponents and keep supporters happy. Conversely, those who want to gain a stronger position must develop countervailing power: “But whether power differentials are large or small, balances of power are always present

wherever there is functional interdependence between people” (Elias, 2012, p. 69). For Elias, then, power balances are an *indicator of mutual interdependence*: Tensions and conflicts between people, groups of people, and even between states are subject to constant change. In the continuous struggles for power and competition among people, opportunities are not always equally distributed: Someone who is relatively powerless today may be relatively powerful tomorrow or have experienced an increase in power, thereby changing the balance of power in his or her favor. People are always rebalancing their relationships: Women and men, children and parents, workers and entrepreneurs, immigrants and locals.³ Gender relations are interesting to Elias as a question of power and as an example of *figurational change*. Thus, in the preface to the study *Women Torn Two Ways* by Bram van Stolk and Cas Wouters (1987), he comments on the changes in gender relations for that time, the 1980s:

What we witness today is quite decidedly a phase in a long-drawn-out power struggle between two different social groups which has some similarity with other power struggles between social groups within a state, and which at the same time also in specific ways differs from other struggles of this kind. In common with many other power struggles, this is a struggle for greater social equality between groups, one of which—women—has in many respects had an outsider position: its members traditionally have been excluded from many social positions monopolised by the other group. At the same time, these groups are dependent on each other in a way no other established and outsider groups in society are dependent on each other. Leaving aside all ideologies, it could be said that no other groups of people are biologically made for each other. (Elias, 2009, p. 272)

Gender struggles thus resemble other struggles for power and recognition in that one group, which formerly had fewer rights and was an outsider, now always demands or has already gained more rights. In the course of this process, both groups, the established and the outsiders, change (see Elias & Scotson, 2002). However, what makes the gender relationship special, according to Elias, is the mutual ‘biological alignment’ of women and men with each other. For Elias, similar to Giddens, Beck, or Castells,

³ At this point, the studies on the change of the aforementioned figurations cannot be explained in more detail; as a representative example, we refer to Ernst (2013) as well as Frerichs (2014) for labor relations, Treibel (2015, 2017) for power constellations in the immigration country, and Waterstradt (2016) for the parent–child figuration.

the emancipation of women is one of the processes of change that cannot be overlooked and, due to the particularly close interdependence of the two groups, also one of the most significant processes of change in the present. While classical gender conflicts are characterized by patriarchal structures with relatively clear asymmetries (superiority of men, subordination of women), in times of new(er) gender conflicts the asymmetries are less clear. This second constellation is the focus of the figuration sociological contributions that examine contemporary gender relations.

1.1.2 *The Gender Relation in Figurational Sociology*

As Stefanie Ernst notes in her survey article on civilization and process theory, figuration sociological studies of gender relations focus primarily on questions of “civilization, power relations, and distance and engagement” (Ernst, 2019, p. 400). Regarding the contributions of recent years,⁴ attention should be drawn in particular to the methodological contributions to the ‘self-location’ of gender researchers in figuration sociology.

Thus, Louise Mansfield (2007), closely following Elias’s sociological study of knowledge, *Involvement and Detachment* (Elias, 2003), argues for a *balance of passion and reason* in gender studies, which she calls ‘involved-detachment’. Her goal is a ‘balance of passion and reason’ in feminism and gender studies:

I use the term involved-detachment to embrace a feminist emphasis on the importance of being and becoming involved with women in order to see and think about their experiences, but at the same time recognizing the need for critical reflections about personal knowledge and values so that involvement is tempered with appropriate degrees of detachment through precision and rigor in the research process. (Mansfield, 2007, p. 115)

In numerous studies, figuration and process theory has examined the increase in power of those formerly weaker in power, including its consequences (Treibel, 2009), thus also the gain in power resources of women compared to men. A common thread running through the analyses is a confirmation of Elias’s argumentation of the *increase in power for women in Western societies in comparison with earlier generations*. In Helmut

⁴The course of the growing *international* reception of process and figuration sociology since the 1990s in the social sciences as a whole cannot be discussed here. An example is the contribution by Fernández-Aceves (2007), who addresses the reception of Elias in Mexican historical and gender studies.

Kuzmics' analysis, for example, the costs, or at least ambivalences, of women's gain in power at the relational level become clear from the men's point of view:

For many young men today, partnership has become a very complex matter. They probably bear far more responsibility than their predecessors for the sexual happiness of their partners in the narrower sense and for shaping the partnership as a whole in the broader sense. They can no longer rely on the 'asymmetrical harmony' of earlier marriages. In everything they do and don't do, there is great room for negotiation with their partner and nowhere is the outcome fixed. From the very first meeting until the decision for family and child there is a compulsion for 'controlled decontrolling of emotions', nowhere can they naively take the initiative [...], everywhere they have to appear as 'relaxed' and 'cool' and at the same time they are expected to show a lot of 'more delicate' emotions. [...] Neither sex nor partnership and family have become easy for broad strata in the young 21st century. (Kuzmics, 2008, pp. 45–46, own translation)

The term 'controlled decontrolling' of emotions cited here comes from Cas Wouters, the Dutch sociologist who has been one of the leading process and gender sociologists following Elias since the early 1980s and who published his monograph on *Sex and Manners* in 2004 (Wouters, 2004). Analyzing manners books, women's magazines, and other materials across the span of the twentieth century, Wouters (2004, p. 153) concludes that the "processes of the emancipation (of women) and accommodation (by men)" are irreversible. Regardless of the differences within Western societies, he states that there has been a *thrust of egalitarianism*. It is precisely this that causes women and men to engage in a constant emotional tussle, what Wouters calls a "*tug-of-war*":

As more egalitarian rules take time to 'sink in', both women and men have increasingly become subjected to a tug-of-war between old and new ideals (and power resources) and to related feelings of ambivalence. Most men and women seem to be egalitarian 'on the surface' and traditional 'underneath'. Most men react in accordance with the dynamics of established-outsider relationships: they do not want to accommodate and do not easily perceive the 'civilized' pleasures of a more egalitarian relationship. (Wouters, 2004, p. 160)

What is interesting about this assessment is the indication that both genders have adjustment problems and vacillate between the old and the new. According to Wouters, however, the resistance of men is greater, since they have more to lose as the previously more established. Possibly, this (self-)realization represents an impulse for the conspicuous engagement of men in figuration sociological gender research.⁵

According to Wouters, power superiority can and should no longer be demonstrated offensively today. This applies primarily in societies with a strongly egalitarian and anti-elitist basic structure, as Wouters (2007) shows in his comparison with other Western societies for the Netherlands, and would possibly have to be relativized for other social contexts. The partnership and communication regulations between women and men and also in same-sex couple relationships are subject to complex codes for all their permissiveness and liberality. One can and should be relaxed and easy-going—but within a reliable self-control on the one hand and attention to the other, according to Wouters (2007). The question of power is often not connected by the actors, whether heterosexual or homosexual, with their self-images.

The article by Dutch sociologist Christien Brinkgreve (2004) on *Elias on gender relations: The changing balance of power between the sexes* can be read as a summary of the analyses outlined here. Brinkgreve states that gender relations as a whole are characterized by *less inequality*: “The three sources of male power over women that existed for centuries—physical strength, knowledge and organization—are now more equally distributed between the sexes, or (in the case of physical strength) have lost their importance” (Brinkgreve, 2004, p. 146, also Brinkgreve and van Daalen in this volume).

The public and private constellations of power are constantly being renegotiated. Social and political problems arise both from a change in the balance of power and from the prevention of such a change, which is currently indicated by a number of signs. Figuration and process theory assumes that these disputes are concomitants of modernization and

⁵ Cf. in this respect Nye (2000) or the borrowings from Elias by Lenz (2009). A sociological interpretation of gender discourses, e.g., in brain research, can only be suggested here: In his “Men” essay, which is well worth reading, Gerald Hüther (2009, p. 79) appeals to his gender comrades that the need for change lies with *them*—and not with women—since the old times are irretrievably over.

individualization. It aims at analyzing supposedly unspectacular changes in their long-term effects.

1.2 *Pendulum Swing I: Resistance to Equalization, Violence, and Traps in Gender Relations*

The non- or anti-egalitarian developments in gender relations have to do with traditional or reactivated patriarchal structures (cf., e.g., Riesebrodt, 1990), which are examined in more detail in this chapter. I distinguish between indicators that point to a persistence of gender inequality and informal processes in private relations that prove to be obstacles on the way to greater egalitarianism.

1.2.1 *Persistence of Inequality*

On a global scale, women are much more likely to be affected by illiteracy, mistreatment, and restrictions on their radius of action and options than men. The often quite literal *curtailment* of their rights is part of everyday life for girls and women in many African, Arab, and Asian societies. In analyzing this massive inequality, feminist research focuses on institutions such as the (patriarchal) family, unequal pay, or the sexism of employers. In the understanding of these analyses, gender inequality is inscribed in institutions—and by no means only in less developed regions of the world. From a gender perspective, Sylvia Walby (2009) argues, violence itself should be understood as the independent domain of institutions. Such a critical radical view, however, represents only one, albeit influential, analysis of violent processes in contemporary societies. For example, Ursula Müller (2004) recalls legal successes in favor of women as well as the fact that in many contexts boys and men are not only the perpetrators, but overwhelmingly also the victims of violence. From a power-theoretical point of view, sexual violence against girls *and* boys in boarding schools, churches, and associations should be examined more closely than has been the case to date. Here, predominantly men try to stabilize their unstable power over adolescents with weaker power. Another mechanism becomes clear when one considers regimes such as that of the Taliban in Afghanistan. They use instruments such as the suppression of women (which, however, is dressed up as higher morals and prevention of impurity) as a means of distancing themselves from ‘the impure West’.

What is perceived in everyday life as a *material* constraint and is often understood in sociological theories as a *structural constraint*, presents

itself differently for figural sociology: It is the people themselves who exert constraints on each other because of their interdependencies. Some critics see here an omission of process theory. For Eva Barlösius (2004, p. 79), for example, the “majority of inequality relations [...] are firmly institutionalized, widely accepted socially, and [...] recognized as politically legitimate” (own translation). She considers the momentum or even the persistence of institutions as lacking in Elias’s view. This criticism is justified insofar as Elias, when he addresses institutional and state macro-processes in the form of the competitive struggles between princes and the central lord or king, as in *The Civilizing Process* (Elias, 1997), is actually more concerned with change than with the continuity of structures. For Elias, as the social strength of actors diminishes, their political power is also directly affected. A society that wants to democratize cannot leave gender relations untouched in the medium and long term. Egalitarian gender relations are considered an indispensable indicator of progress and development not only in feminism or gender studies, but also according to the standards of global actors such as the UN (e.g., Human Development Index (HDI) and Gender Development Index (GDI)). EU and OECD standards may be able to make more of a difference in Germany’s gender equality policy than internal social criticism. Institutions or bodies that show a conspicuous underrepresentation of women come under pressure to legitimize themselves.

On the other hand, studies on violence against women show the continuing high global significance of this problem. One third of women worldwide experience violence, to an extent that was not expected, regardless of their social background or professional position (WHO, 2013; UNODC, 2018; for Germany also BKA, 2018). Regarding the question of how figural sociology views gender violence, I consider Renate Kroll’s (2005) consideration plausible. According to Kroll (2005, pp. 162–163), Elias’s underestimation of male dominance structures may have something to do with the fact that he fundamentally assumed gender equality and therefore could not see the constancy of patriarchal domination—especially in the case of formalized equality. Elias states that women still have fewer resources than men. He is less focused on the fact that the formerly more powerful men seek to expand their bastions with new means of power (see also Ernst, 2019, pp. 403–406).

For Elias and figural sociology, the terrain gains that women have made outweigh the terrain losses. This raises the question of how to evaluate the tension of continuity and change in gender relations: Is the glass

half empty or half full? According to Elias's analysis of the process of civilization (see Elias, 1997, 2006, pp. 100–117), it is not so much surprising that we are *so little* civilized, but that we are so civilized *at all*. Sociopolitically, women need to pay attention if they do not want to lose terrain they have gained (Treibel, 1997, p. 332). This is because numerous autocratic regimes and right-wing parties of the present day work to discredit gender equality policies and feminism. Actual or perceived gains in terrain by women are a central push factor for this development. The resistance to women's growing means of power has strong parallels with the irritation toward the integration of immigrants that has long since taken place. In short, 'old German men' cannot be sure that they automatically have an advantage over 'new German women' (Treibel, 2015).

1.2.2 (*Self-Imposed*) *Traps in Gender Relations*

What happens when women have more power opportunities? What happens to *the* men and to *the* women? From a process-theoretical point of view, *all* those involved find it difficult to switch to a more balanced gender ratio: The rules for the new gender game have not yet been rehearsed or even internalized. In this context, the rhetorical figure of the trap is conspicuously often used, in counseling literature, in systemic couple therapy (cf. Gulotta, 2009), and in sociological analyses alike. Thus, the relapse into old patterns, such as the division of labor in couple relationships, is referred to as a "relationship trap" (Koppetsch & Burkart, 1999, pp. 190–196) or as a "traditionalization trap" (Rüling, 2007). Jean-Claude Kaufmann has devoted numerous studies to the pitfalls of egalitarianism in modern couple relationships. In the following, he describes a characteristic situation in which men do not yet have themselves under control:

At the wheel or just as a passenger: there are no neutral positions in the car. Especially when it comes to the extremely delicate issue that we are now turning to: driving style. [...] Driving style is one of the rare counterexamples where men seem to get more annoyed than women. This is easily explained. In the ways of thinking and looking at things, traces have remained from the time when the man alone drove the vehicle. Taking a seat in the passenger seat is new for him, and it is very difficult for him to step back and rely completely on his partner. Unwillingly, he keeps his eyes on the road and is quick to criticize. (Kaufmann, 2008, pp. 94–95 (own translation); also Cameron, 2007, pp. 14–15)

Women, who are actually the beneficiaries of equalization, often (still) behave inappropriately. In her polemic *The Cowardice of Women*, the journalist Bascha Mika describes what she sees as a typical example. It is about a flat-sharing community in which the female flatmates and especially the girlfriend (Julia) of the one male flatmate (Timo) take over his household chores:

What's going on in their shared apartment is a *power game*, as children already know: Who can last longer? Can scream longer. Hold their breath longer. [...] Timo is a master at this game. He can simply stand dirt and pressure longer than his roommates. He knows that, takes advantage of it and plays the boyish good-for-nothing: Here-I-stand-and-can't-do-otherwise. And there is always someone stupid who gives in. *But Timo's position of power is ambivalent*. On the one hand, Julia voluntarily does what he secretly expects. On the other hand, she binds him because he is in her debt, *she makes him dependent on her* by taking everything from him. He rules because she is subservient to him, she rules because he needs her. (Mika, 2011, pp. 106–107, emphasis added, own translation)

What is interesting about this account is the use of the term *power play* and the references to the *mutual dependencies*. Despite all exaggeration, an everyday and nevertheless classic situation for the figurative change between women and men is described here: The women involved are aware that they should not care in such an exaggerated way in the sense of egalitarian–modern relationships, they do it anyway and thus automatically stand on the ‘brakes’ as far as equalization is concerned. The antecedents of such power plays are left out of this argument, as they are, to my knowledge, in the research. For figurational sociologists it would be obvious to include the generational perspective. For already the parents of Julia and Tim, to stay with the above example, have in many cases already put the brakes on, namely, by strengthening their daughters in the direction of professional orientation, but not obliging their sons in the direction of housework and family work. In this way, the repeatedly confirmed statements of boys who affirm women's professional activities in principle—but not for their own future partners—also become comprehensible.

By no means do men exclusively determine the rules of living together nowadays—and there is no guarantee that women's rules are egalitarian per se. The situation is not clear-cut: On the one hand, the self-management

demanded today certainly requires ‘soft’ standards with which men tend to have (more) difficulty (Brinkgreve, 2004). According to this, the “entrepreneurial self” (Bröckling, 2007) would offer women a starting advantage. On the other hand, it is precisely the stress factors of the neoliberal economy that make some women conclude, “I’m not going to do that to myself!” (Stern, 2010, own translation).

In principle, the options for life plans today would even be greater for many women than for men: in the choice of career, all options are open to them, in principle from educator to manager, while many men do not really consider the ‘choice’ to orient themselves ‘downward’. At the same time, ‘masculinity’ does not remain something static, but differentiates itself (Villa, 2009, p. 127). The situation is further complicated by the fact that even in supposedly ‘neutral’ settings gender stereotypes show their persistence. In *functionally framed interactions*, according to Christine Weinbach (2007), the attributions of ‘male’ and ‘female’ are not necessarily neutralized. In this way, so-called professionals are imagined as men. Nevertheless, the thesis according to which people change but institutions and organizations do not falls short. Institutions and organizations are by no means consistently the ‘preventers’ of egalitarianism, but are compelled to deal with it and take it into account (Funder, 2017; Müller et al., 2013).

According to the sociological view of figuration, people shape their world, even if they often do not see through what they are driven by. People are freer and at the same time more dependent than they themselves believe. Women, according to Brinkgreve, are visibly making their voices heard and could also develop even more force to change the rules of the game:

The established can set the rules, but if erstwhile outsiders win power, they also make their voice heard, and are also going to participate in setting the rules off the social game, and force the established to reckon with the fact. This process is now in progress, and it is not taking place without tension and conflict. (Brinkgreve, 2004, p. 152)

For process theory, the pendulum swings in this direction are particularly revealing: How does equalization present itself, what gains can be booked, where are the risks and opportunities?

1.3 *Pendulum Swing II: Equalization and Terrain Gains of Women*

Elias looks at gender relations primarily where women have already risen, that is, have been able to change the balance of power in their favor. It should be remembered: power is interesting for Elias where the playing strength of both ‘teams’ is comparable—like in a good soccer match, which is made exciting by equally strong teams. The latent inequalities and ambivalences rather than the offensive discriminations and sexism are the subject of such a gender theory. Women, according to Elias, succeed in historically and nationally quite different phases of social development in leaving the outsider position and claiming rights for themselves from the more established and more powerful men. This “long-drawn-out power struggle” (Elias, 2009, p. 272; cf. quotation in Sect. 1.2.1) is so exciting precisely because the two groups are moving ever closer together. The “greater social equality” (Elias, 2009, p. 272; cf. also Brinkgreve, 2004) is in the foreground for Elias—and not social inequality.

Characteristic of this is the so-called ideal of figuration, combined with the seemingly paradoxical notion of *harmonious inequality*, which some of the women studied pursue according to van Stolk and Wouters (1987) (Elias, 2006, p. 242). This ideal leads women who have fled to women’s shelters to return to them, or to want to return to them, despite the violence perpetrated by their partners. “As the authors of this book demonstrate so clearly”, Elias points out, “when in practice the balance of power between the sexes begins to change, women not only have to fight against the dominant males, they also have to struggle with the male-dominated self-image within themselves” (Elias, 2009, p. 275). The trend points in the direction of increasing women’s power in the game and decreasing men’s monopoly position. In his analyses and commentaries on gender relations, Elias proves to be a theorist of equalization and individualization (Klein & Liebsch, 2001).

The gains in freedom and scope for women in Western societies are unmistakable. Their opportunities to participate in education and work, their options for individualization, that is, their possibilities to lead a life of their own (Beck-Gernsheim, 2008), are greater than they were two to three generations ago. However, the lower degree of *external restrictions* by parents, relatives, or husbands (in terms of individualization theory: the release from traditional ties) cannot be had in a cost-neutral way. The possibility to decide more for oneself goes hand in hand with *self-restrictions*,

the compulsion to self-coercion (Elias, 1997). In short, more freedom also means more responsibility. This is exactly the feeling of adolescent girls and young women in Western societies: In their eyes, what matters today is not (anymore) gender, but the respective concrete person. They assume egalitarianism, which they themselves declare to be an option. A traditional life plan is then also self-chosen and freely chosen. Everyone can (and must!) live his/her own life (Hartung & Schmitt, 2010). However, the claimed irrelevance of gender is then often irritated by personal and professional experiences: Women discover that, contrary to their previous perception, gender does count and men cling to their privileges (cf. Sect. 1.3).

From this perspective, it is worthwhile to consider two statements that have become common sense in gender studies: Ulrich Beck's (1995, p. 20) formulations of "verbal openmindedness and rigid behaviour" and Angelika Wetterer's (2003) (mere) "rhetorical modernization" of gender relations have long since found their way into journalistic discourses on gender relations. Indeed, there is much to be said for mapping in this way the slowing of change and the distinction between equality in theory and inequality in practice. In terms of figurational sociology, this situation presents itself as follows: 'behavioral rigidity' cannot be sustained in the *long run*. Men affected by the equalization of women cannot help but change—even if hardly perceptible to sociological eyes. It is in this sense that I understand Wouters' notion of men's accommodation in the gender configuration (cf. Sect. 1.2.2., also see Wouters in this volume). Sociologists of figuration find precisely these *gradual* changes and pendulum swings in the balance between equalization and its prevention interesting (Ernst et al., 2017, also Ernst in this volume).

Intimate relationships—as much as the participants like to believe this in the romanticization of their love—are by no means free of power struggles. This is equally true for heterosexual relationships (Kunze, 2005) and for homosexual couples (Kippax & Smith, 2001).

Figuration sociological gender research comes across as innocuous, similar to the sociological work on everyday life and gender by Jean-Claude Kaufmann (1996, 2008). It shows the importance of processes and interactions that seem unspectacular at first glance (Treibel, 2009, p. 156) and yet marks the gradual changes in societies. As far as same-sex relationships are concerned, these are more than gradual changes, even if they are not perceived as serious or progressive enough by those affected. In view of the self-image of a freer, not or less (hetero-)normatively

burdened relationship design than in heterosexual couples, the question of power balances nevertheless also arises.

All Power to Women? A female chancellor alone certainly does not make a gender revolution. However, this is by no means a social-historical side issue. Hermann Korte (2009) and Sighard Neckel (2010) alike refer to Elias's topos of the *king mechanism* (cf. Elias, 1997: II) to analyze what they see as Angela Merkel's impressive and underestimated power play. The kingship mechanism, originally attributed to the courtly societies of France, requires a high degree of farsightedness and long-sightedness and the ability to keep followers and opponents in balance.

2 CONCLUSION: FIGURATIONAL SOCIOLOGY—THE APPROPRIATE APPROACH TO THE AMBIVALENCE OF GENDER RELATIONS

Can current gender relations be described as progressive or as rather regressive? For process sociologists, it is difficult to imagine that progress, for example, in the equality of women vis-à-vis men, can be completely undone and forgotten. This optimism and the described *focus on progress in favor of women* make figuration sociological gender research suspect to other strands of theory. Thus, we have come full circle, but in a different place than initially suspected: the reception barrier to figuration theory is more than a mere 'taste barrier' directed against the *sound* of Elias's texts. If one assumes that gender is understood as an analytical category in gender studies, regardless of all internal differences (Aulenbacher et al., 2010, p. 225), then it is clear: figuration sociology is not *original* gender research. It does not have gender built in as a basic category, but studies gender relations as one social entanglement among many. For the analysis of established-outsider relations, ethnic and national affiliations, social origins, and sexual orientations are to be included in addition to gender (cf. in this sense Velija, 201).

I see the reason for the—even if in the last years internationally less—reception barrier on the part of gender research in the systematic of figuration theory. Those researchers who refer to Elias tend to use his terms integratively in the sense of general sociology and not offensively in terms of gender theory. This principle, however adequate it may be for the respective works, reduces the visibility of these works for gender research.

As mentioned above (cf. Sect. 1.2.1), Elias is not the only sociologist who sees the transformation of gender relations as one of the most momentous social changes of the present. This is less surprising for the generation of Beck, Giddens, or Castells than for Elias, the least ‘contemporary’ author in comparison. I see the possibilities of connection for a sociological diagnosis of time and social theory in particular where it should not be about aspects of constant inequality but about dimensions and characteristics of increasing equality between women and men as well as about the resistances against women’s terrain gains.

So where are the limits and where are the potentials of figurational sociology for a gender-reflexive social theory?

At the beginning I characterized figurational sociology as a theory of power relations. The moment one links power with the idea of balance, as initiated by Elias, strong asymmetries and violent relations are difficult to conceptualize. In other approaches, violence and continuities of inequality tend to be overestimated, while processes of violence or even excesses of violence tend to be *underestimated* in figurational sociology. However, even the radical critics of gender relations do not deny that there has also been a change in favor of girls and women and an opening toward same-sex relationships and a plural understanding of gender. The epochal change consists in the fact that today violence and discrimination and not equalization and equality have to be legitimized—even if there are old and new resistances in this respect.

In terms of gender relations, nowadays ‘anything goes’, and there are “progressive and regressive thrusts” (Ernst, 2019, p. 406) alike. But this ‘everything’ is not equally studied. Feminist and gender theories are focused on relations of inequality, not least for reasons of their genesis in the history of science and politics (cf. Hesse-Biber, 2007). With figurational sociology, one can take a turn and break away from the often unconscious fixation on the present (cf. Elias, 2006, pp. 297–333) and analyze what—including all ambivalence—has been gained. Who would have thought a hundred years ago that even and especially on a global scale the emancipation of women would one day be the central criterion for democracy and modernity? This egalitarian push as well as the vehemence of the resistance by populist and (neo)nationalist movements still await a comprehensive (figuration sociological) explanation. Moreover, the possibilities for connecting figurational sociology to other power-theoretical concepts as well as to intersectionality research are far from exhausted. The intersection of these approaches is to see people less as ‘women’,

‘men’, or members of other genders, but as holders of social positions. Who takes a position of power, when and how, and how permanent this is, is not determined. Social processes do not follow a unilinear pattern, but pendulum movements. In this respect, the current anti-feminist discourses and movements are an indication of how much has changed. Women’s gains in terrain are met with resistance—if they were insignificant, the reactions would not be so violent.

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Some Reflections on the Emancipation of Women: How Far Did We Come?

Christien Brinkgreve and Rineke van Daalen

1 A COMPLEX FIELD

Anno 2022, there is no better illustration of the contradictions and fluctuations in the power relationship between women and men than the simultaneity of the #MeToo movement and the anti-abortion campaign, even the abolition of the right on abortion in parts of the United States. The first development indicates that women have acquired more power in their relations with men, the second is an indication that conservative forces are also playing an important role in the struggle for emancipation. These can always make themselves felt, even in a domain where progression seemed to be self-evident. A backlash represented by conservatives can happen at the same time as the increase of nurturant and caring men and fathers. The gender domain has changed and is continuously changing.

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Internationally, general patterns are perceptible, but these are nuanced by nation—our reflections are in particular about the Netherlands. Overall, the field has become more complicated and more ambiguous.

So it is difficult to answer the question ‘how far did we come’. Maybe the phrasing is misleading: ‘how far’ suggests a clear yardstick to measure aims in the future, but a lack of clear and unequivocal aspirations is one of the characteristics of the process of emancipation. The struggle for equal rights, for freedom and recognition—the first steps in processes of emancipation—has a better circumscribed focus than the next stage, after the first steps of liberation are taken. ‘Freedom *from*’ oppression and domination has a more ordered goal than ‘freedom *to*’, for the inevitable next question is: Freedom to what?

Equality? Sameness? Becoming like men? Or more attention for differences and more room for variation? Freedom to live a life according to your own longings and preferences (Brinkgreve, 1988)?

2 FOCUS ON FEMALE LABOR MARKET PARTICIPATION

However, despite contradictions and fluctuations it is undeniable that the social inequality between men and women has diminished. We, women in western societies and born after the Second World War, are the third generation that received the frink political right to vote and to be chosen in parliament. We are the first generation who grew up with contraception, giving us control of the number of children we want, and making it possible to decide when to have a baby. Education in all its breadth became accessible for us, participation at the labor market became a possibility, even a must, also while caring for children. We are supposed to share the care for household and children with our partners. And in the meantime, ambivalences, dilemmas, and contradictions concerning our emancipation became a steady ingredient of our inner life.

At the level of planning and policy, however, the issues in the Netherlands were narrowed and had an unilinear direction: mothers should enter the labor market. Paid labor became the most important policy target, aimed to put an end to the traditional family model with breadwinning fathers and caring mothers. Such a gendered division of responsibilities was strongly developed in the Netherlands, and this model went together with an inner-directed family life. But after the Second World War that conventional configuration became increasingly seen as impeding economic

development, as an obsolete tradition which should be overcome (van Daalen, 2002).

In the 1950s and 1960s, employers introduced part-time labor as a strategy for married women to combine child care with paid labor (Portegijs et al., 2008), a phenomenon which was particularly appropriate to the organization of family life in the Netherlands. But even part-time labor implied a radical intervention in the relations between men, women, and children. They lost their clear-cut position in the family, and apart from the one-and-a-half earner model, collective arrangements for children were institutionalized in the slipstream of this policy to stimulate the labor participation of their mothers. This process took place in a period when the welfare state became restricted and finances were cut. It gave the collective care for young children an unfortunate starting position. Until today, child care arrangements remain a meager facility, semi-professionalized, badly enabled, privatized, and never completely included in the structure of educational institutions. Meanwhile, because of labor shortages, part-time work is nowadays problematized by the government and both parents are encouraged to work more hours a week (van Daalen, 2005, 2007).

3 CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS

In the field of women studies, however, the feminist debate covered more ambiguity and a larger range of controversial themes than paid labor and part-time or full-time employment. We mention the warnings against love and motherhood as a trap, a hindrance for female autonomy, and by contrast, the vision on motherhood as a source of power and wisdom (Sevenhuijsen, 1988). We mention the focus on the axis of equality and inequality, as concerns rights and positions, and on the other hand, on the diverse dimensions of similarity and difference, involving female characteristics, ‘the specific feminine’, visible, for example, in *l’écriture féminine*, and more recently, in ‘feminine’ leadership qualities (Brinkgreve & Koenen, 2010). A topic for ongoing debate was the influence of ‘nature’ versus ‘nurture’ (socialization, social context) on habitus, emotions, and behavior. And, a highly discussed theme in recent years, the increased resistance to unwanted sexual advances in labor settings, the public domain, and in the intimate sphere of living.

Amidst this broad range of topics, and despite fluctuations and contradictions in the process of emancipation, we see that the old patterns of

male dominance are gradually losing their grip. The social indignation about male sexual harassment is a clear example of this transition in power relations. In interpreting these developments we chose a few relevant trends for a more detailed view.

3.1 *Nature Versus Nurture*

Feminists were a long time afraid to put attention to biological factors ('nature'), as for centuries this biological difference was used as a legitimization of social inequality. In their eyes it was not physical characteristics but socialization that made you a woman. 'You are not born as a woman, you are made a woman', was the famous slogan of the feminist philosopher and writer Simone de Beauvoir. They cherished the illusion of the malleability of behavior. But nowadays, in the footsteps of evolutionary psychologists (e.g. Delfos, 2004), sociologists (e.g. Wilterdink, 1976), and primatologists (e.g. de Waal, 2022), biology can also play a role in the discussion, without the fearful reflex that this means a legitimization of the fixed pattern of male dominance and the traditional gendered division of labor. In his most recent book, *Different. Gender through the Eyes of a Primatologist* (2022), de Waal expands on such a more balanced view of the relationship between nature and nurture. Everything we do is the result of the interplay between nature and nurture, between biological potentialities and culture. Human beings are—just like other species—not the masters and designers of their own behavior. Humans do not escape the forces of evolution.

3.2 *Back to the Body and to Mothering*

So, more equality gave, surprisingly, also more room to the female body. Young feminists allow themselves to behave in an explicit feminine way, they are proud of their bodies, their sexual desires, and their capacity to become pregnant, giving birth, and caring. This attitude is more in line with the ideals of traditional motherhood than with the focus on paid labor from the beginnings of the second wave of emancipation—an interesting fluctuation in the ideals of emancipation. One of the Dutch feminist icons of the 1970s and 1980s, Meulenbelt, who always defended paid labor for mothers, in some way changed her view on labor and care (2022). Earlier, she was one of the advocates who argued that fathers had to enable mothers to enter the labor market. But opposite to her expectations and

her dreams child care remained a badly paid woman's task, also in collective arrangements; and in her latest book Meulenbelt asks also recognition for women who want to take care of their own children. She defends mothering as a gratifying task, not something to outsource completely to others. Some feminists had the same opinion in the 1970s. Their sound however never became dominant, and their voice always went in tandem with warnings about financial dependency and loss of autonomy: the trap of motherhood that sets women behind in their social and economic position.

3.3 *Gender Identity*

In line with these debates, the scope of the debate about gender and gender identity became broader, the circle of groups that were involved widened. The emancipation of people with other sexual orientations became included, homosexuals, transgenders, non-binary people. These different groups in the LGBTI movement are ambivalent in their attitude towards the role of biology. Some of them use differences in genes, hormones, and the brain in order to legitimate their own sexual preferences. Others want to escape from the sex-system and liberate themselves from the m/f categorization. They want to be free to choose their own gender identity. The aim of this movement is to make the whole gender repertoire in all its variety accessible for everyone, to create gender without frontiers, to reach 'real individuality' (Meijer, 2022; Palmen, 2022; van der Ven, 2022).

Therefore, an increasing number of people claim the right to choose their own gender identity. This development has expanded the gender repertoire and has widened the ideal of equality: a complex mix of equality and variation. All these movements and fluctuations, and the genesis of new concepts, indicate that, especially for a young generation, the old-time thinking in fixed and dichotomous categories of man and woman has become out of date, in particular as concerns sexuality and gender. People have obtained the right to choose from a range of possibilities. 'You are allowed to be who you want to be.' This implies a further step in the liberation from fixed categories and prescribed ways of living and appearance. New ideals, new codes of behavior, and another discourse on gender become apparent, with new issues and new questions. In a sense 'the emancipation' has to be invented anew.

The emancipatory effects of this movement however are unclear. The new discourse on gender more and more affects the public debate and the

public sphere (e.g. the abolition of the m/f difference in toilets and the recent right to choose your own gender identity in your passport). But at the same time the m/f categorization is still a basic way of orientation and classification, for most people the first and most familiar point of identification. Also, it is still unclear if the abolition of this classification is related to changes in the balance of power between the sexes, and if this is the case, what could be the impact on the position of women.

3.4 *More Room for Differentiation and Expression of Emotions*

As the power balance with men became less unequal, the contrasts in behavior between women and men faded away. The division of tasks and social roles became less rigid. Fixed scripts of behavior and appearance became more flexible, more open for variation and subtle nuances. The variation in behavior increased, and also in physical appearance and gender identification.

So more equality between men and women in social position went together with more room for variation. This development corresponds with one of Elias' concluding remarks in the final chapter of his *The Civilising Process* (1939). In studying the civilizing process, Elias described how a decrease of power differences coincided with diminishing contrasts in conduct. A broader range of social and emotional standards became accepted, and people got more room for the expression of emotions. Such changes in social and emotional control and their interconnection are important themes in figurational sociology (see some—mostly Dutch—examples: Brinkgreve & Korzec, 1979; Brinkgreve, 1980; De Regt, 1984; van Daalen, 1988; van Daalen & de Regt, 2003; Wouters, 2007; van Krieken, 2022).

4 INCREASING EQUALITY: NEGOTIATED, CONTESTED, ASYNCHRONOUS

The process of women emancipation took place in a social field that underwent large changes. In the 1960s and 1970s the overall mood was optimistic, and in favor of the liberation of groups with less power and status. Nowadays the political mood tends to go more into the direction of right wing and conservative movements. See as mentioned above, the anti-abortion campaigns in different parts of the world. Or see how the

progression in the emancipation of women also induced a backlash among men—sexual intimidation, aggression at home and at the working place (de Swaan, 2019). Female students are often doing better than male students; men now have to work side by side with women in respected professions that were for a long time a male monopoly, for example, in the domain of law and medicine. Or another example, female authors get more recognition and more often they win prizes than in earlier times. Among men such changes can evoke feelings of failure and fear of loss of position. Some of them accommodate to this changing power relations, others feel rage about losing their privileges and they become insecure about their masculinity. After many years of focusing on the position of women there is growing awareness of the weakened position of men, of their worries and their insecurity, of their self-doubt and their vulnerability. And of the high and complex social demands and expectations that are linked with masculinity (Meijer, 2023). A shifting power balance between the sexes goes hand in hand with changing conceptions of masculinity and femininity.

But apart from the conservative backlash from outside, women are also hindered by internalized patterns of subordination. Emancipation is not only a struggle against external oppression but also an internal struggle against internalized domination (Elias & Scotson, 1965). Changes in power relations are multi-level processes: the political, social, and psychological field are intertwined. These processes are characterized by movements and counter-movements, and progress in the public domain goes together with emotional strains and ambivalences in the domain of intimate relations.

There is, for example, a tension between egalitarian ideals and traditional behavior patterns (Ernst, 2022). In one of her books, *The Second Shift*, Arlie Hochschild gives a wonderful analysis of such practical and emotional incongruities in the thinking and acting of the couples she interviewed and observed in the 1980s (Hochschild, 1989). She noticed differences between what people say and what they do, between their ideals of equality and their highly unequal daily practices: ‘I care for the baby, he for the car’. It would be interesting to study how couples are talking about still existing patterns nowadays. In the Netherlands, for example, men are doing more household tasks than in earlier generations, but research demonstrates that women are still doing the lion’s share of the household tasks, even when both partners are working full time (see Portegijs et al., 2016).

Arlie Hochschild's work demonstrates the persistence of traditional patterns of male dominance and female subordination in the intimate domain. These patterns are lying underneath the division of domestic labor, sometimes invisible, often unrevealed, and time and again a source of strain and quarrels. Changing power relations induce new tensions and sources of frustration. Issues like 'whose needs and wishes are dominant?', 'who has to adjust to whom?' are sometimes silent layers of feelings of discomfort and disappointment. The social and psychological levels of the process of emancipation don't have the same pace and are not always moving into the same direction.

In the 1980s, Bram van Stolk and Cas Wouters introduced the conception of the figurational ideal of harmonious inequality between women and men (van Stolk & Wouters, 1987). In the 2020s, this ideal has been replaced by a broadly accepted and applied ideal of equality, but that equality is often precarious, sometimes controversial, and most times difficult to obtain. Van Stolk and Wouters present, for example, a fine description of differences between the two sexes' capacity for empathy. Often, men are shown to have had no idea about their wives' experience, being unaware of the need to give it serious thought. Women, as a subordinated party, on the contrary, felt obliged to empathize with their husbands and to consider their wishes. The ideal of equality is difficult to realize and is continuously negotiated and contested. The resulting frictions give fuel to discomfort, disappointment, and open or hidden rage (Brinkgreve, 2004).

The realization of equality in the public domain involves strenuous effort and is still hindered by many obstacles (Brinkgreve, 1999; Fischer, 1999). See, for example, the long and arduous efforts to crash the glass ceiling. But in the intimate sphere the realization of equality appears to be even more difficult. The obstacles are more deeply concealed, deeply anchored as they are in the psychological layers of conduct and habitus, in old patterns of dominance and submission that are not easily released.

Such asynchronous changes at different levels of integration are a phenomenon Norbert Elias noticed in *What is sociology?* (1978). Elias distinguished three levels of control in human societies, and he studied their interconnection: the control of the world outside, the control of social relations, and the control of emotions. Societies made enormous progress in controlling the world outside, but control of social relations occurred slower, and emotional control is even more lagging behind.

5 CONCLUSION

If one tries to overview the complex and moving field of gender relations one has to conclude that there has become more equality in the power relations between men and women. That gives, as we said, more room for differentiation, in ideas and in acting. We see a reduction of social contrast in the behavior and the emotions of men and women, and an enlargement of varieties in gender manifestation. There is a blurring of gender differences, and a greater diversity in physical appearance and behavior.

In interpreting these transformations, the work of Norbert Elias can be useful in two ways. First because of the connection Elias makes between social and emotional processes—one of the main themes in *The Civilizing Process* and in his whole oeuvre—in bridging the disciplinary divide between sociology and psychology, Elias succeeds in giving an integrated conception of human beings. That perspective makes it better possible to understand inconsistencies in emancipation processes.

This indicates a second associated point where the work of Elias can be helpful. The social emancipation of women has made progress and has acquired acceptance, but the psychological emancipation of both men and women is lagging behind. The intergenerational patterns of superiority and inferiority have a tough and sometimes hidden perseverance, sometimes on an unconscious level, fed by earlier and repetitive experiences of subordination and humiliation. It is important to put attention not only to the dynamics of control of emotions, but also on the tensions and ambivalences that go together with asynchronous developments such as perceived in the emancipation of women (van Krieken, 2022). The significance of such tensions was convincingly illustrated by *Vrouwen in tweestrijd*, about the ambiguity of women who abandoned their husband and returned to him again, notwithstanding the abuse and humiliations they experienced before. They had become acquainted with their subordination; it gave them a feeling of familiarity and security (van Stolk & Wouters, 1987).

It would be interesting to probe further into the emotional tensions that occur as a consequence of changing power relations between women and men, to investigate the perseverance of old habits and of long-established patterns of habitus. The ‘drag effects of habitus’ do not only play a role in the public and political field (Hochschild, 2016; Ernst et al., 2017), but also, and perhaps in particular, in the domain of intimate power relations, a multi-layered and not easily accessible field of research

(Hochschild, 1989). Ideals of equality have gained ground and the balance of power has become relatively more equal, but the old ideals and practices of male supremacy and female subordination have not disappeared. This generates tension and conflict, not only among individuals, but also within them—in the form of inner conflict or mental ambivalence (Brinkgreve, 2004).

A better understanding of the interplay of relations and emotions, with all its tensions and ambiguities, would enhance our understanding of the complexity of gender relations in turbulent times.

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Informalisation and Emancipation of Lust and Love: Integration of Sexualisation and Eroticisation Since the 1880s

Cas Wouters

1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I examine changes in romantic and sexual relations of young people in relation to the emancipation of women and young people since the 1880s, a point when social codes dominating the relations between women and men, girls and boys, parents and children, changed towards greater leniency, as part of processes of informalisation. What follows is a sketch of how young people and women have successfully escaped from

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under the wings of parents, men, and husbands, and how this has coincided with an emancipation of their sexuality. As individuals and collectively, women and young people increasingly became sexual objects as well as sexual subjects: in processes of trial and error, they increasingly learned to cope with sexual longings, both with those of others directed towards themselves and with their own. As part of these processes, they directed themselves both to established codes and to their internalised codes about how to connect and integrate sex and love—that is, to connect sexual and relational intimacy. These codes were changing as women and young people became emancipated, thus propelling subsequent attempts at finding a more gratifying and enduring lust balance between sexual pleasure and relational fulfilment. These changes manifested themselves in subsequent spurts of sexualisation and eroticisation. This chapter sketches significant moments in these processes and ultimately raises the question ‘Where are we now?’ A tentative answer to this question is attempted as a theory about why love has become more difficult, lasting love in particular.

2 FORMALISATION AND INFORMALISATION¹

What people know about life and how to live it—that is, our knowledge and our codes of behaviour and feeling—is taught and appropriated in ‘love-and-learn relationships’ and in ‘love-and-learn’ processes. These concepts, coined by Norbert Elias (2009b [1987]), implicitly recognise that for understanding the history of humanity at large as well as the history of any particular society and every individual human being, the history of love is as important as the history of learning. The two are closely connected, ever since the advent of *Homo sapiens*, when social codes came to dominate genetic codes as steering mechanisms for survival. Since then, human offspring have needed to be adjusted to the prevalent social codes and initiated into the reservoir of social knowledge. Both individual learning and transmitting collective knowledge over subsequent generations depend upon the cohesive strength and warmth of their bonds, particularly those involving

¹ An earlier version of this chapter was published in *Human Figurations* 5 (1) 2016. This version is based upon previous research published in English (2004, 2007, and 2010) and in Dutch (2012). The latter is a monograph largely based upon Dutch sexology studies, which implies an emphasis on processes in the Netherlands, but I think and hope the sequence and details are useful for international comparisons and the general line of these developments is recognisable all over the wealthy West.

children. The fundamental importance of human love-and-learn relations and processes is mirrored in their fears and anxieties:

Genetically, the whole family tree of fears and anxieties seems to have a two-fold root: the fear of physical extinction and the fear of loss of love. Threats to one's life and one's love in a very elementary form seem to be the original danger situations. (Elias, 2009a, p. 140)

In turn, the structure of people's fears and anxieties as well as the qualities of their bonds of love depend upon the levels of social organisation, pacification, and civilisation in and between their societies: 'they are always determined, finally, by the history and the actual structure of his or her relations to other people, by the structure of society; and they change with it' (Elias, 2012, p. 485).

In expanding networks of human interdependence, from the 'fire regime'—the social organisation of controlling fire—to the agrarian regime and the industrial regime, the levels of differentiation, integration, and complexity have risen together with rising social controls of people over each other and themselves (Goudsblom, 1992). As human groups expanded, differentiated, and became increasingly complex, the same happened with their codes of behaviour and their collective stock of knowledge: both also expanded and differentiated, becoming more detailed and complex, thus demanding higher levels of self-regulation for keeping people from transgressing the prevailing steering codes. On the whole, this trend towards higher levels of 'social constraints toward self-constraint' was documented from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century in Elias's book *On the Process of Civilisation* (Elias, 2012 [1939]). It was a long-term process of *formalisation* of social codes.

Around the 1880s, unplanned social processes of differentiation, integration, and growing complexity, together with their inherent social constraints towards self-constraint, had apparently reached a critical level that allowed for—and soon also demanded—a partial breakthrough in the formalisation process. Fixed rules of behaviour and their demand for unthinking obedience to social superiors lost some of their function in maintaining social organisations and even tended to become counterproductive. Increasingly, as old rigid social controls loosened up, formalisation lost its dominance to a process of *informalisation* (Wouters, 2007). A rapidly increasing variety of relations and situations in complex networks of interdependency came to demand larger degrees of fine-tuning and this implied

manoeuvring in increasingly flexible and sensitive ways according to more flexible guidelines, thus opening up a wider range of acceptable behavioural options.

The choice among options, however, did not make behaviour easier, because making the right choices among a complex multitude of options came to depend on social skills that could no longer be learned on the basis of simply being obedient to authorities and fixed rules. It demanded the capacity to attune oneself to (changes in) the specific parameters of each particular relation and situation. These demands coincided with rising empathy, together with openness, ‘ease’, and reflexive caution. People were increasingly drawn into the social competition of learning these necessary social skills and performing them with ‘ease’. This competition intensified in the course of following decades and spread from circles of calculating politicians and commercial entrepreneurs to the much wider circles of calculating citizens. In this competition, the ‘personality capital’ of a habitus that allows for more sensitive and flexible, subtler behaviour turned into a national habitus, and more or less simultaneously, into the international habitus of the wealthy West.

As a whole, the transition in dominance from formalisation to informalisation also involved growing demands upon the more intimate and private relations such as between children and parents, and the romantic, erotic, and sexual relations between women and men.

3 INFORMALISATION IN RELATIONS BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN

Continued informalisation processes involved a growing dependence of children upon the ability and necessity of learning the related skills of reflexivity and flexibility. It implied growing demands on love-and-learn relations and therefore growing interdependence of parents and children through which their relationships have gained depth and warmth as well as importance and intimacy over a longer period of time: both parenthood and childhood were prolonged (see Rölíng, 2006, pp. 24, 26). These transformations were captured in the expression ‘century of the child’. Particularly in that century, the emancipation of children and teenagers in relation to parents and their representatives—and of women in relation to men—clearly implied rising levels of equality as well as of intimacy.

Since about the 1880s, the traditional emphasis in child rearing, which emphasised subservience to institutional and adult authority sanctioned by corporal and other punishments, shifted to an emphasis on qualities linked to the self-regulation of children, sanctioned by reasoning and differentiations in affective warmth and permissiveness. Relations between children and parents gained intimacy and warmth as well as sensitivity and reflexive thoughtfulness. After the Second World War, the level of parental investment in their children was again rapidly rising, a process that coincided with widening circles of identification, ranging from animals, women, and children to such groups as Indians and Negroes, now known as native Americans and blacks. Emotional investment in love-and-learn relations accelerated particularly in the 1950s and 1960s, when this trend was backed up by rising levels of material security and physical safety, allowing for the spread of a warmer and more intimate, flexible, and cautious form of parental control on the self-control of children. Thus, more and more children in warmer and more intimate family relations have experienced a type of discipline or social control that is less directed at obedience than towards self-control and self-steering—that is, towards learning to think and decide for themselves (cf. Alwin, 1988).

Simultaneously, having and raising children became increasingly important for providing an unthinking sense of belonging and a source of motivation in life, whereas religion and political ideology, even social class, gender, and nationality, lost much of that capacity. For increasing numbers of people, the love-and-learn relations with their children became a major provider of meaning in their life and their strongest motivating power. In raising children, a warmer and more intimate, flexible, and cautious parental control over the self-control of children spread and became known as ‘love-oriented discipline’ (Bronfenbrenner, 1958).

4 GENDER AND SEX: THE LUST BALANCE

The general trend towards rising empathy, openness, and reflexive caution in relations pertains particularly to relations involving sexuality. The emancipation of women and young people went hand in hand with an emancipation of their sexuality; and, at the same time, parents—of different social classes to varying degrees—came to take more account of the interests and feelings of their children, and also more account of the sexuality of their teenagers. However, it has only been since the Sexual Revolution that

women, including young women, have themselves actively taken part in public discussions about their carnal desires and how to achieve a more satisfactory lust balance—the balance between longings for sexual gratification and for enduring relational intimacy. From then on, more and more people have been experimenting in their relationships between the extremes of desexualised love (sexual longing subordinated to the continuation of a relationship) and depersonalised sexual contact and the extremes of being a sexual object and a sexual subject. This experimentation process provoked many new and more varied answers to what might be called the lust-balance question: when and within what kinds of relationship(s) are (what kinds of) eroticism and sexuality allowed *and* desired? From the 1960s onwards, topics and practices such as premarital sex, sexual variations beyond the missionary position, unmarried cohabitation, adultery, fornication, extramarital affairs, jealousy, homosexuality, pornography, teenage sex, abortion, exchange of partners, paedophilia, incest, and so on—all part of a wider process of sexualisation—implied repeated uprooting confrontations with the traditional lust balance. People were confronted with the lust-balance question more frequently and intensely than ever before.

This question is first raised in puberty or adolescence, when bodily and erotic impulses and emotions that were forbidden from early childhood onwards (except in cases of incest and paedophilia) are again explored and experimented with. The original need of small children for bodily contact and their subsequent frank and spontaneous explorations remain, without being reciprocated (Fonagy, 2008), and they are restricted and stopped when adults begin to experience them as sexual. Sexuality *and* corporality are thus set apart from other forms of contact and compartmentalised. In puberty and adolescence, when teenagers' longings and demands for intimacy and confidentiality are already quite developed, the taboo on touching and bodily contact has to be gradually dismantled. More or less overcome by their new longing for sexual pleasure and gratification, young people have to integrate this longing into both their personality and their relations. They have to learn how to become a sexual subject *and* a sexual object and to find a balance between the two. For most, this is a process of trial and error. In the process of sexualisation and eroticisation, especially since the Sexual Revolution, women collectively have come into a position similar to that of young people when becoming sexually mature: both entered the trial-and-error process of becoming more of a sexual subject.

5 TRIAL AND ERROR AS COLLECTIVE PROCESSES: SEXUALISATION AND EROTICISATION

In the twentieth century, especially since the 1960s, this process of trial and error has been going on collectively. Allowing for differences in nationality and social class, the subsequent moments of collective learning processes determined to a large extent the range of available options with which individuals living in each moment saw themselves confronted. Since the 1880s, over decades in which women emancipated, men adjusted to that, and young people continued to escape from under their parents' wings, this range has widened considerably. Until the 1960s, however, a highly uneven balance of power between men and women, together with a highly compartmentalised sexuality, ensured that a woman's carnal desires and experiences remained unmentionable. It made for sexual relations that did not demand much relational or personal intimacy, even between husband and wife. This is typical of a lust balance in which the longing for sex and the longing for enduring relational intimacy are not strongly integrated, can even be highly segregated.

This view of widening options and a collective process of trial and error seems in conflict with the fact that, in most Western countries, the old rule of sexual abstinence before marriage was formally maintained up to the 1960s. However, this impression of conflict is wrong, because increasingly people just paid lip service—they did not live up to this rule and practised the policy of 'don't ask, don't tell'. Dutch research shows that young people of the generation born at the beginning of the twentieth century postponed their first coitus on average until ten years after becoming sexually mature. The generation of about 1935 waited seven years, an average decline of ten months per ten years. This downward trend continued, for the generation of 1970 waited five years, which was a decline of seven months per ten years. Apparently, this decline was at a slower pace than that of the generations before the Second World War (Vliet, 1990, p. 56). And although 'the pill' did of course allow for more, and more varied, sexuality and for greater emotional tranquillity in seeking sexual pleasure, these findings nevertheless seem to suggest that the Sexual Revolution was not as revolutionary in terms of crucial aspects of sexual behaviour such as the age of first sexual intercourse as it was for opening the public debate on sexuality and of ending the hypocrisy of formally upholding the ban on premarital sexuality.

However, as the balance of power between women and men, as well as between parents and children, became less uneven, possibilities for more frank and warm intimate relations increased—as did the necessity of developing such relations. For men, the change was mainly towards an ‘erotici-sation or sensualisation of sex’. Male sexual pleasure came to depend more strongly upon the sensual or erotic bond with the sex partner, that is, upon relational intimacy. They also came to experience women not mainly as sexual objects but also more as sexual subjects. For women, the change was towards a ‘sexualisation of love’ and becoming a sexual subject as well as a sexual object. Together, these changes made for a single integrated process of sexualisation and eroticisation that permeated across the board of social life, private as well as public. As the part process of sexualisation attracts much more attention, and because it also repeatedly provokes moral indignation, the significance of the part process of eroticisation is often only partly acknowledged.

6 TRIAL AND ERROR BEFORE THE 1960s: TWO SOCIAL CLASS TRAJECTORIES

Until the 1960s, the trial-and-error process towards easier and more comradely relations between women and men had many trajectories, but at least two that are differentiated by social class. One trajectory involves ‘good society’ [gute Gesellschaft] and groups of families for whom it largely served as a model. In the 1880s, young people from these social classes had limited opportunities to select a marriage partner—courtship activities being strictly controlled by parents. An example is dancing, which was held in high esteem as a courting arena. Only at a private ball or dinner dance could a young man dance with a girl of his social class. But first he had to ask her parents for permission, and when he was listed in her dancing programme he might opt for a second dance with the same girl—but opting for a third dance would create expectations and obligations, directly connected to getting engaged and then married. This scene changed as young women went out to work in such places as offices, libraries, hospitals, and schools, and aimed at financial independence. In addition, sports and bicycles and the dance craze of the 1920s opened up less cramped opportunities for meeting. Young people were allowed increasingly to visit public dancing places and to organise private dance parties only for themselves.

In the Netherlands, the informalisation of courtship activities and engagements in good society also entailed an erosion of this public pledge to marry and a trend towards young people more easily breaking off their engagements. From the 1920s onwards, this more easy-going attitude is documented in Dutch manners books by increasing complaints about young people more casually breaking off their engagements, as well as by advice, based on this change, that the announcement of an engagement be scaled down to a relatively small gathering, rather than being the big ceremonious occasion with a formal and public pledge to marry that an engagement used to be (Wouters, 2004).

In the social classes where young daughters would usually work as domestic servants, salesgirls, or in workshops, the codes of 'good society' hardly functioned as a model, and parents traditionally allowed their offspring to attend meeting (and mating) occasions like fairgrounds or to stroll along promenades. Couples would form, and many a marriage was arranged after a young woman got pregnant (van Hessen, 1964). In their marriages, most husbands and wives followed traditional patterns of married life: strongly embedded in larger we-groups of families and characterised by a division of tasks and worlds between husbands and wives that in effect largely excluded confidentiality and relational intimacy (Straver et al., 1994). These traditions ruled in most villages and working-class neighbourhoods.

7 NEW PRACTICES AND NEW CONCEPTS

The trend in the direction of young people escaping from under their parental wings and experimenting with erotic relations on their own can be presented by focusing on new words and practices.

An important new practice is indicated by the rise in the 1920s of the Dutch word *verkering*; it was derived from the verb *verkeren*, which means 'to be or move in [this or that] company'. In the 1880s, the word acquired a romantic connotation, particularly when it was transformed into the noun *verkering*. As such, some people of the middle classes understood it as a romantic relation preceding a formal engagement, while others saw it as 'trying out' a relationship that could develop into *vaste verkering*, a more fixed (= *vast*) commitment, similar to what became known as 'going steady' in English. In Dutch good society, however, people looked down on *verkering*, both the word and the practice. In their view, it was a disgustingly bad habit among the middle and lower classes, and they continued to

perceive an engagement as the only proper arrangement that builds up to marriage. Thus, they tried to ban the practice by banning the word and would always call their ‘try-out’ an ‘engagement’, even when the couple had never been through a formal engagement ceremony (more details in Wouters, 2004, 2014). A demonstration of the long-lasting power of this ‘good society’ habitus is presented by a psychologist and journalist in her review of my 2012 book:

Throughout the twentieth century there was no [Dutch] word for a romantic relationship with sexual implications. A couple could be married or engaged, but there was no name for the preceding phase, at least not in manners books giving advice on these thorny problems. The word *verkering* was used only in the vernacular and just did not apply to people in higher or bourgeois circles. *Verkering* or *vaste verkering* was something the kitchen maid had with her soldier. Wouters repeatedly uses the term in his book, perhaps also in an attempt to get it accepted as neutrally descriptive, but for me it is saturated with insufferably petty and chiefly vulgar associations. (Ritsema, 2012)

Another new practice and neologism of the 1920s is *scharrelen* (literally: searching or groping movements, like chicken scratching, rummaging), a word used to indicate a relation with a girl for flirting and for fooling about in an affair that was not intended to become a serious love relationship. Girls who indulged in the practice could be called a *scharrel* and were in danger of being seen as ‘the town bike’ (the literal translation from the Dutch is ‘licked-off sandwich’).

A similar negative word was the *amatrice* (female amateur). From the 1920s to the 1950s, it expressed the moral concern of Dutch upper and middle classes about the morality of girls in the younger generation. The *amatrice* was defined as ‘the girl who gives herself to a friend in a loosely-fixed relationship for which she is rewarded by being taken out often—to be distinguished from the professional prostitute’ (Saal, 1950, p. 62). These girls had sex, which should not happen, and if it did, it should be kept secret or denied—for even the suspicion of indulging in having sex could damage their reputation and respectability and, therefore, their future chances of a good marriage. But when denial became impossible, for example, because more and more girls came to visit physicians and clinics with venereal diseases, the word *amatrice* was invented:

The appearance on the scene of the *amatrice* as a *dramatis personae* [...] is connected to the appearance of a premarital female sexuality that could no longer as a matter of course be localised only within the lower classes nor be lumped automatically under the heading of prostitution. (Mooij, 1993, p. 136)

This figure of the *amatrice* evaporated completely in the Sexual Revolution. With the moral stigma removed, the *amatrice* became a girl with a steady relationship, a ‘normal’ girl who had *verkering* or *vaste verkering*. She was, in fact, ‘going steady’.

In the second half of the 1930s, parental control over the younger generation had softened to the point that ‘wise parents’ would not think of asking a young man for his ‘intentions’ when he paid a little extra attention to their daughter, ‘not even if he were to take her out frequently’ (quoted in Wouters, 2004, pp. 72–73). Parents were advised to give freer rein to their adolescent children by *gedogen*, conditionally allowing of such a practice, usually combined with a policy of cautious deterrence. In this way they tried to ‘hang on’ by discreet yet distinct attempts at staying ‘in the scene’ with their children, thus maintaining both an intimate bond and a guiding eye. It seems obvious, however, that particularly from the 1920s onwards, the try-out relations of young people, whether called an ‘engagement’ or a *verkering*, were becoming increasingly ‘sexual’ (details in Wouters, 2004, 2012, 2014).

8 PROCESS CONTINUITIES IN CLASS DIFFERENCES BEFORE AND AFTER THE 1960s

The sexualisation of ‘try-out’ relationships was observed in all social classes, it was part of a general trend, and yet some differences between the social classes continued from before the 1960s into later decades; these differences can be conceptualised as *process continuities*. A significant one is that, in comparison with girls and boys from the middle and upper classes, their young counterparts from lower social classes generally got married at an earlier age. It is one of the traces of a traditional pattern that persisted among them. Another one is that social control over the young is less directed towards teaching them to steer themselves and more towards demanding their obedience in combination with a rather partial supervision and a tacit policy of ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’. This policy is directly related to an understanding of the budding sexuality of boys and girls as a ‘natural

force' of 'raging hormones' that are bursting to come, and both are highly regarded and status enhancing among those who are keen on acquiring sexual experience. Belonging to the same traditional pattern are the findings that these youngsters usually start tentative sexual relations at an earlier age than their contemporaries of higher social classes and that they proceed more quickly from first contact to full intercourse. These and other examples of greater sexual directness are reported in sociological and sexology studies and are discussed in Wouters (2012).

Young people from higher social classes report more reserve in developing relational and sexual trajectories. Among them, masturbation is reported more often. On average they are later in starting an intimate ('try-out') relationship and also take more time than their counterparts from lower social classes before they get to experience full sex. They are more reticent in getting there because they want to develop a mutual consent that includes 'being ready' for the experience. This reticence is most probably related to an upbringing that focuses less on obedience to parents and other authorities and more on learning to decide for oneself. At the same time, increasing parental trust in the self-steering abilities of children has reduced the old fear among parents that their offspring would lack self-control and let themselves go sexually when social control was absent. It seems obvious that these differences between the classes concur with differences in the development of self-steering.

8.1 *Connecting Sexual and Relational Intimacy: Trial and Error Since the 1960s*

Despite many fluctuations, accelerations, and counter-currents at many levels of complexity, on the whole, trial-and-error processes went in the direction of a 'sexualisation of love' (involving mainly women) and an 'eroticisation or sensualisation of sex' (mainly men). Particularly in the collective quest of how to connect sexual with relational intimacy, prominent episodes can be distinguished. Five of these will now follow.²

The *first* is the *Sexual Revolution*. At that time, young people were breaking the taboos of previous generations to such a degree that there was an acceleration in the emancipation of sexual emotions and impulses—allowing them into consciousness and public debate. Women

²Four are more elaborately backed up with data and described in greater detail in Wouters (2004), the fifth one in Wouters (2010).

rejected their traditional submissiveness towards male superiority to the extent that it became socially accepted for them to participate in public discussions on sexuality and a more gratifying lust balance. They subjugated their traditional shame and shame-triggered counter-impulses involving lustful and sexual feelings; they stopped answering questions regarding sexuality in a more traditionally conservative way than men; and in the early 1970s, they silenced men who were still complaining about their wife getting an orgasm too slowly by venting complaints about husbands having their orgasm too fast. In a short period of time, the relatively autonomous strength of carnal desire came to be acknowledged and respected. For both genders, sex for the sake of sex changed from a degrading spectre into a tolerable and thus acceptable alternative, allowing more women and men to experiment with sex cheerfully and outside the boundaries of love. At the time, the spirit of liberation from older generations prevailed, and did not allow much attention to be given to the *demands* of liberation.

From the late 1960s onwards, as living together without being married became socially accepted and marriage receded as the only acceptable aim in initiating a trial relationship, the number of people getting formally engaged declined markedly and the word *verkering* lost much of its function and tended to become obsolete. This trend accelerated in the next decades with the spread of the term '*having a relationship (with someone)*' to indicate a sexual and romantic relation (for the sake of such a relationship). In one respect, the word 'relationship' went through the same development as the word *verkeren*: it acquired a sexual and romantic connotation—in the 1950s (see WNT, the Dutch historical dictionary *Woordenboek der Nederlansche Taal*)—and over the next decades, this connotation gained strength.

The period between 1968 and 1974 was one of rapid major transitions. An indication is that the reported sexual experience of young people in the Netherlands doubled while their attitudes in matters of sexuality became twice to three times more permissive. More important is that in these years a trend in teenage sexuality appeared that would continue during subsequent decades until today: the principal conditions for parental consent to their teenagers having sex and also for a romantic and sexual 'sleepover' had become: 'feeling strongly for each other' and mutual consent about 'being ready for it', that is, ready for sex as an exploration of physical, personal, and relational feelings (Wouters, 2012).

A *second* remarkable episode in the collective trial-and-error process is in the second half of the 1970s, when women brought about a shift in

emphasis from ‘sexual liberation’ (from parental sexual codes) to ‘sexual oppression’ (by men): now, opposition turned against the codes and morals of the dominant sex, against sexual violence, and pornography came to be seen as triggering sexual violence. Around 1980, massive anti-pornography demonstrations were held by women, thus clinging to their romantic relational ideal of love. At the same time, however, there were discussions about women who enjoyed only one-night stands, thus excluding sexual intimacy from other forms of intimacy; their longing for relational intimacy had come to be experienced as an obstacle to sexual pleasure. They avoided any emotional commitment in having sex. According to tradition, a woman should have sexual desires and fantasies only *within* a romantic relationship that was meant to last a lifetime. In a lust balance that is tipped the other way, a woman’s sexuality could be aroused only *outside* such a relationship, in almost anonymous, instant sex. This compartmentalisation of sexuality or ‘sexual separatism’ (Lasch, 1979, p. 338) clearly showed women to be moving in between the extremes of ‘love without the ballast or duty of sex’ and ‘sex without the ballast of love’.

As an undercurrent, this lust balance formed the negative of that propagated by the anti-pornography movement. To a large extent that movement was an ‘emancipation cramp’, expressing problems connected with the emancipation of sexuality, for the attack on male pornography concealed as well as it expressed a ‘fear of freedom’ (in Erich Fromm’s famous phrase), a fear of experiencing and presenting oneself as a sexual subject. This fear of an old danger was expressed in the anti-porn movement as well as in sexual separatism, and either way, the opposite sex was seen as the origin as well as the solution of all difficulties. No woman will have been able completely to withdraw from this development and its inherent ambivalence, if only because, before the sexual revolution the social code allowed women to express only one side of the lust balance.

In some respects, men appeared to be in a similar transition. Sexology studies from the early 1970s indicate, for example, that many married men still reported a preference for keeping an emotional distance from their wife when having sex; this preference for sexual separatism was probably connected with an experience similar to that of women who separated sexual intimacy from other forms of intimacy, because of the experience that emotional intimacy disturbs their sexual appetite. By 1981, however, a sexology study showed that the number of men reporting a preference for an emotional distance when having sex with their wife had strongly declined. Apparently, they no longer wanted her mainly as a sexual object, but also as

a sexual subject. In the same period, this shift can also be deduced from a decline in the percentage of men who expressed a strong aversion to giving oral sex ('eating pussy'). It had dropped from 50 per cent in 1971 to 20 per cent in 1981 (Vennix, 1989). A *third* prominent moment in the collective trial-and-error process consisted of a *lust revival*. From the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, the 'emancipation cramp' was overcome: a more relational outlook and a (female) 'lust revival' surfaced, together with public discussions on such topics as 'men as sexual objects', women's adultery, masturbation; and with the success of groups of male strippers like Chippendales and the launch of 'female pornography', the emancipation of female sexuality and the sexualisation of love accelerated again, both among a new generation of young women and among feminists, a leading older one of whom looked back at the anti-pornography movement as a 'kind of puritanism' (Meulenbelt, 1988).

The change among men was again in the direction of experiencing women less as sexual objects, and more also as sexual subjects. In 1989, half of the men reported the practice of giving oral sex as a regular one (Vennix, 1989).

A comparison of teenagers of the 1980s generation (born in between 1968 and 1972) with what their parents of the 1950s generation (born between 1938 and 1945) reported on their youth (Ravesloot, 1997) shows huge changes: teenagers of the 1950s generation were living in strict hierarchical relations in which much was obligatory, little allowed, sex a taboo, and many reported surreptitious attempts to escape this rigid regime, whereas in the 1980s, parents had changed to giving their teenage children the possibility of growing into a sexual human being by allowing them to experiment with 'try-out' relationships until one of these proved to be intimate, warm, and open enough for the young couple to decide they were 'ready for it'.

The *fourth* episode in the process of sexualisation and eroticisation was from the late 1980s into the 2000s, when both longings of the lust balance were becoming integrated on a higher level, allowing more sex and expecting more love, which implied that female emancipation was not only expressed in acknowledgement of the principle of mutual consent but that of mutual attraction as well. The traditional observation that girls love boys more than sex and boys love sex more than girls was eroding quickly. During these years there was a *love and lust revival*. Sexology research of 1990 finds that, particularly after having acquired sexual experience, 'most young people think of love and sexual pleasure as two sides of the same

coin, and that this goes for both boys and girls' (Vliet, 1990, pp. 70–71). Sexologists also report young people in 1990 beginning sexual relations at an earlier age while also postponing marriage and/or having children at a later age, and in this longer in-between period they report a trend towards having more subsequent monogamous 'try-out' relationships, characterised as 'serial monogamy' and 'short fidelity' (Vliet, 1990, p. 65; Vogels & van der Vliet 1990).

The emancipation of female sexuality, and its counterpart, the eroticisation and bonding of male sexuality, were expressed and propelled by literature (such as feminist publications), by protest activities (like those against sexual violence and harassment) and by changes in the law such as making rape in marriage liable to punishment. They were also driven by welfare arrangements providing the material basis for many women to develop an 'equanimity of the welfare state' (Stolk & Wouters, 1987). In addition, they were spurred on through men being caught in a pincer movement. They were squeezed between, on the one hand, their longing for an enduring intimacy, becoming subject earlier and more strongly to more or less rigorous limitations such as the likelihood or threat of desertion and divorce; and, on the other hand, their longing to satisfy their own sexuality, becoming increasingly dependent upon their talent for arousing and stimulating a woman's sexual desires.

A *fifth* striking episode in the collective trial-and-error process towards a further integration of love and lust was in the first decade of *the twenty-first century* with the international outbreak of an attack on 'sexualisation' and 'pornification'. At first sight, this attack may give a different impression from that of a continued integration of 'love and lust', because both these concepts, pornification in particular, do carry strong negatively loaded moral connotations. On closer inspection, however, these protests predominantly symbolise a new emphasis on the love side of the lust balance, for in comparison with love, sex had become relatively easy. If the old anti-porn movement symbolised an attempt at blending more sex with love, the new one symbolised an attempt at combining more love with sex. The long-term process of sexualisation and eroticisation clearly continued as before in the direction of emancipation of sexuality and certainly not in the direction of the preceding long-term process of desexualisation, in which taboos on sexuality had gained strength.

In the Netherlands, the clearest manifestation of the quest for combining more relational intimacy with sexual intimacy was the ‘slow sex’ movement. The people involved in this ‘slow sex’ movement attacked the sex of pornography, seen mainly as mechanical, vulgar, and loveless, but their attack was not so much directed against pornography as it was more an outcry for a higher quality of sex—sex as ‘haute cuisine’—and that quality was sought in the further integration of relational intimacy with sexual intimacy. The most successful outcry was a book entitled in German *McSex: Die Pornofizierung unserer Gesellschaft* (Hilkens, 2010 [original Dutch 2008]). Its author lived a life of chasing sexual gratification until she experienced it as empty; her attack on pornification is predominantly in favour of eroticising sex and, therefore, in favour of a lust balance that further integrates relational and sexual intimacy.

The development of young people’s attempts at integrating sexual longings into a personally gratifying and socially acceptable lust balance, however, is still very much in full swing. Continued tensions and shifts in the social definition of what constitutes an ideal lust balance also allow the conclusion that the Sexual Revolution has not ended. Individuals as well as societies still struggle with its ‘aftermath’, as has recently been demonstrated by the confusion, moral fervour, and moral indignation of attacks on ‘sexualisation’ and on paedophiles.

In 2015, research by HBSC (Health Behaviour in School Children) on 44 western countries showed that Dutch children rank highest in having good communications with their parents and in feeling that talking with their parents about their problems is possible (Kuntsche et al., 2015). It seems likely, however, that many parents as well as adolescents would like to talk more openly with each other about sex, but they don’t know how, as they are again and again overcome by some kind of confusion, indicating that discussing problems of the lust balance is still quite difficult. They are surrounded by relatively high levels of shame and embarrassment, particularly if discussing *personal* sexual problems, fears, and desires. Even with their peers, most teenagers find it difficult to talk about their own sexual experiences and longings, but between them and their parents a specific obstacle has developed. That is because (except in cases of incest) it was in this parent–child relationship that parents did not reciprocate or, if they had, eventually stopped reciprocating intimate touching and other physical contact. Instead they came to reject and ignore such contact until even the

thought of its possibility had been banned from relation and conversation. At the same time, however, as children grew up, emotional intimacy in this relationship rose to a level at which other relations would have become sexual. This creates a tension that may explain the collective fear and confusion about paedophiles.

This explanation is based upon relationships between parents and children becoming increasingly intimate and erotic. As levels of their intimacy were rising, their erotic components tended towards comprising emotions and impulses that were warded off immediately for having an alarming sexual nature. Experienced as extremely ‘dangerous’, they tended to be restrained immediately and almost automatically, thus excluded from consciousness and perceived as ‘not mine’. To the extent that these emotions remained repressed and unacknowledged, they became the kind of ‘blind spots’ of consciousness which, when touched upon—for example, when discussing paedophiles and child sexual abuse—give rise to vehement opposition to such emotions and to the people who experience them (see Waldhoff, 1995; Wouters, 1998a, b).

This opposition did not extend to homosexuals (who in the past had been conflated with paedophiles), in the Netherlands, homophobia declined; to give one indication: in 2012, half of young men and a quarter of young women disapproved of two young men kissing in public. By 2017, this percentage has almost halved to 27 per cent of young men and 13 per cent of young women.

8.2 *Avoiding Old Practices and a Quest for New Words*

In 2005, ‘having strong feelings for each other’ sufficed for 80 per cent of the Dutch school population (representative sample, aged 12 years and older) as a precondition for having sex (de Graaf et al., 2017). The corresponding figure in 1995 was 75 per cent. As both mutual and parental consent became more dependent upon the strength of feelings for each other and the depth of the relationship rather than upon age or anything else, teenagers could feel relatively free to grow into ‘being ready’ for having sex together.

In this process, the word ‘love’ took on old-fashioned romantic connotations, and in reaction, many shunned it or overused it, thus eroding old pretensions that now demand more caution. Particularly in the early phases of experimental ‘try-out’ relationships, the word ‘love’ became too strong to use—but at the same time, virtually *all* old words for a love relation

came to be stigmatised for smelling of old-fashioned inequality, of ‘horse and carriage and children in marriage’. Expressions such as ‘going steady’, *verkering*, ‘being engaged’, and *vaste verkering*, ‘a steady relationship’ are dropped or postponed as long as possible. They tend to reappear, however, in the language of parents and teachers at nursery and primary schools when talking about the intimate peer relationships of young children, from the ages of three and four upwards. One may hear, for example, that Olivia is Sam’s fiancée, that Oskar and Julia have *verkering*, and that these ‘couples’ are ‘in love’—an example of ‘overusing’ the word ‘love’ but also an example of how the word increasingly came to capture all relations in which people ‘have strong feelings’ for each other. The word ‘puppy love’, however, is carefully avoided. It has disappeared like most expressions of ridicule. In some of their ‘try-out’ relationships, teenagers and adolescents even avoid the word ‘relationship’ because it would suggest that one’s choice of partner has been made, lock, stock, and barrel, and ‘independence’ has been renounced. They use euphemisms such as ‘having something [a thing] with someone’, they ‘are seeing someone’ or refer to ‘my friend’ with many variations in emphasis on the first or the second word, but without further specification. There is great ingenuity in avoiding traditional connotations. Young Dutch people (in their late teens and twenties) have introduced the words *prela* and *rela* (Julen, 2015); the latter consists of the first letters of the word *relation*, thus indicating only half the commitment and obligations of a full relationship³—which is more publicly known and acknowledged by at least parents and friends. A *prela* refers to a phase before a *rela*. The *prela* may or may not be monogamous, but the *rela* and the relationship are supposed to be. Before the *prela*, there may be a phase of *dingesen*, a neologism (‘thinging’), or of *scharrelen*, an old word that today has lost its negative connotation. This fading provides a clear example of the connections between the emancipation of women, young people, and their sexuality. Today, *scharrelen* means having an affair with someone just for the pleasure of it—for the sake of the affair, that is, without serious intentions or commitments or claims about the future. And the practice of *scharrelen* is placed early in serial ‘try-out’ relationships as an

³ Searching in Dutch etymological dictionaries for the word *relatie*—the Dutch translation of the English word relationship—suggests that when it appeared in the domain of intimacy (in the first half of the twentieth century), its main connotation was sexual, as in ‘an extra-marital relation’, that it acquired erotic/romantic connotations only later, and that, subsequently, the latter connotation gained strength, probably hand in hand with the emancipation of women and sexuality.

early phase in learning about love and lust. In a personal communication, a female journalist in her early twenties wrote to me:

Girls often use the word when talking as women amongst each other.

‘We *scharrel* a bit’. That even sounds tough: ‘Oh indeed, a man, but ah, you know, just for the fun of it’. Many people of my generation think it is quite normal to first have a period of *scharrelen* before getting a bit more serious; they don’t want to get into a *prela* or *rela* straight away. (van Sadelhoff, 2015)

Another expression of recent use in the Netherlands is ‘flow’; young people speak about ‘my flow’ and of ‘being in a flow with’ someone. This expression is probably taken from the concept of ‘flow’ as developed by the Hungarian–American psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, basically meaning ‘complete absorption in what one does’, and spread when people started using it for a ‘try-out’ relationship involving sex.

These new concepts and expressions, *dingesen*, *scharrelen*, having a *prela* or a *rela*, and *being in a flow* are all vague, and they breathe embarrassment and the fear of getting into a more serious full relationship too soon. Some interpret this vagueness as stemming from young people’s reluctance to enter into a commitment, enjoying their freedom, and a varied sexual menu. Indeed, these people do exist, but they characteristically fail to feel and show the embarrassment that is characteristic of the whole quest for concepts and expressions that can possibly convey the various phases in the development of love *and* sex, of lust–balance relations and experiences. The most important condition for entering into a commitment is in the feeling for someone, and it seems that as long as one does not get at the root of that feeling, the commitment is postponed. Instead, there is a *prela*, a *rela*, or a *flow* or ‘something’.

9 RECENT DEVELOPMENTS TOWARDS INTEGRATION

(a) Sexual Intimidation, Sexual Violence, and #MeToo

In 2012, sexology research among the Dutch school population showed that 4 per cent of boys and 17 per cent of girls reported to be forced at least once to participate in sexual activities; in 2017, these figures were 2 per cent and 11 per cent, respectively. From this and other sexology research, it is often difficult to answer what behaviours are actually lumped together

in (self)reports on sexual intimidation and sexual violence, and a closely related difficulty stems from rather rapid developments in the social definition of these behaviours and their experience, in line with Caxton's sentence: 'Thingis sometyne alowed is now reprevuid'.⁴ However, an overall trend of a declining prevalence of sexual intimidation all over the West is virtually undisputed. In Dutch sexology research [focusing] on young people, the topics 'sexual intimidation' and sexual coercion—to extort sexual acts from someone—first appeared in 2005, and they confirmed that girls and boys who are used to more coercion in their social class and family also report using and experiencing greater degrees of coercion. They also confirmed a relatively big difference between boys and girls, a remnant of a tradition in which this difference was explained away by old phrases like 'boys will be boys' and 'she asked for it'. These are still heard and remembered well, even though they recently suffered a serious blow from the #MeToo movement.

This movement struck a sensitive nerve and brought a significant change in the social and sexual habitus of women and men. The significance can be shown by a comparison of the #MeToo movement with a change that occurred in the 1950s and early 1960s, when in the USA more and more boys and girls broke away from the traditional dating system by 'going steady'. Previously, this practice had been rejected as 'only for cowards' who stick to just one member of the opposite gender, too scared to experience a larger variety. The increase of going steady was widely discussed from this and other perspectives, but its significance as a new phase in the emancipation of young women and their sexuality largely remained in the dark. This aspect of the transition was largely kept from sight: the traditional double morality that blamed and shamed young women for sex and its consequences functioned as a blindfold.

This tradition functioned as a regime of silence: women submerged in it felt too much shame to break the traditional silence on sexual abuse.

In the dating system, women were held responsible and, therefore, open to being blamed for all sexual acts, whether unsanctioned or uncalled for: either she had not set limits (in time) or she was not truly virtuous. In the 1950s, dates with boys who are 'out for what he can get' augmented; these boys did not want to find out whether a girl was 'for real' or for 'kicks'; they were merely sexually aggressive, as advocated by Dr. Albert Ellis in his best-selling book, *Sex and the Single Man* (1963):

⁴From Caxton's *Book of Curtesye*, printed at Westminster about 1477–1478.

get as much of her body bare as quickly as you can. Deftness and speed often pay off in this regard ... do it firmly, vigorously, in spite of some resistance on her part. Show her that you are determined to have her as nude as possible, even though you are not going literally to rip the clothes off her back and begin to rape her. (quoted in Bailey, 1988, pp. 92–93)

But even if she liked the boy and trusted him, she would still run the risk that at some point ‘the boy begins to be insistent and urgent in his caresses ... his fondling gets rougher and more intimate’ (Duvall & Duvall, 1958) and turns out to be unable ‘to stop necking and petting at a “safe” point’ (Unger, 1960). Girls had to prevent their own but certainly his sexual excitement from ‘reaching the point of no return’ (Unger, 1960). ‘If a pregnancy ensues, it is the girl who is “in trouble”’, while ‘the fellow’s future [is] at stake’. And you ‘know how prevalent is the male “double standard”’ (Duvall & Duvall, 1958, pp. 204–205). With these dating conditions prevailing, how could girls enjoy much sexual activity?

In 2017, continued in 2018, the wave of protest by the #MeToo movement against virtually all degrees of sexual intimidation effectively broke the regime of silence that dominated these practices. It broke a major stronghold of this regime: internalised shame resulting from shaming the victims and pressured the social codes dominating these experiences to allow for deeper and stronger feelings of anger, indignation, and injustice.

No longer are these feelings almost automatically silenced by feelings of shame, but now shame is increasingly silenced by them. This will increase the chance that a type of mutual consent develops that includes ‘being ready for the experience’ and that mutual attraction becomes integrated with mutual consent to the extent that both develop into a taken-for-granted condition for all sexual pleasure.

(b) Declining Differences Between Social Classes

In the Netherlands, differences of social class seemed almost to disappear behind the rise of populist issues. An increase of ‘national tribalism’ coincided with decreasing tolerance towards immigrants, while on the other hand the Dutch people’s relatively greater tolerance in matters of (homo) sexuality, euthanasia, and recreational use of soft drugs, together with its interconnected greater self-steering capacities, were strongly confirmed by emphasising them as characteristic parts of the Dutch lifestyle (see Maris, 2018).

In matters of sexuality, differences between the social classes have diminished further. Compared to the 2012 report, the 2017 sequel of Dutch sexology research ‘Sex under 25’ (de Graaf et al., 2017) reported significant changes regarding young people at different levels of education, treated here as an indication of social class. A class difference that continued concerns young people in higher level education reporting to masturbate more often than those in lower-level education. Another longstanding process continuity was that they reported to talk more often about sex and sexuality with their parents, their friends, and their last sex partner (de Graaf et al., 2017). As in previous years, their attitudes towards sex before marriage or towards sex without love are more positive, as are their attitudes towards sex in general. On a scale of pleasure, they rate their most recent sexual experience more highly. In addition to continuities, in other traditionally found differences between social classes, reversals have also been reported in 2017.

Those in higher levels of education used to be less sexually active than their counterparts in lower-level education, and now they report to have more sexual partners, and to have more sex than those in lower level of education, both in the previous year and throughout their lives so far. They also reported to having sex more often while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, to use dating apps for arranging (sexual) dates. Another reversal is in their reporting to practice ‘sexting’ more frequently than young people in lower-level schools: ‘12 per cent of young women and 13 per cent of young men have sent a nude picture or sex video of themselves to someone else in the past six months. That is much more than in 2012, when these figures were 4 per cent for young women and 6 per cent for young men.’

10 WHERE ARE WE NOW? PARADOXES AND INTERPRETATIONS

The quest for new concepts can be taken as another signal that to ‘feel strongly for each other’, to love and to make love are increasingly perceived as learning processes with various stages or phases. From this perspective, it is obvious that all phases of this trial-and-error process of learning to develop a gratifying lust balance are taken increasingly seriously. This includes having casual sex: in 2012, 44 per cent of the boys and 25 per cent of the girls approved of having sex-for-the-sake-of-sex; in 2017, the corresponding percentages had risen to 59 and 44 per cent. This does not mean

they themselves practice what they approve of, for three-quarters of young girls and boys had developed a relationship with the person with whom they had their first sexual encounter (de Graaf et al., 2017).

Many young people today start earlier with having a ‘try-out’ relationship and postpone the moment of having sex and also the moment of ‘settling down’ or marry. For them, the duration of the quest for a gratifying lust balance, with its various phases and variety of ‘try-out’ relationships, takes longer and also takes more consecutive partners than they and/or their parents might wish, but—paradoxical as it may seem—both are much more likely to have originated from a rise rather than a decline in their longings and demands for intimacy, openness, and warmth.

The main drivers of the emancipation of sexuality are related not only to rising levels of equality and intimacy between women and men, but also to rising expectations about what constitutes a gratifying lust balance. Emancipation processes and decreasing inequality in gender relations implied that both women and men developed *higher expectations* of their love life, and as parents they also developed *higher expectations* of their family life—and that they accordingly make higher demands on each other. This rise in expectations of a gratifying lust balance, the rising importance of love in particular, probably also explains why in 2017 half of young people on average reported to have had their first coitus one and a half years later than in 2012; the average age in 2012 was 17.1, in 2017 this was 18.6. A similar change occurred with other forms of sex, such as kissing, while the importance of sex is rated higher, and both genders also report to highly (>90 per cent) enjoy sexual feelings. Taken together, these data indicate a further development of what was brought to view by sexology research of 1968 and 1974, namely, a strengthening of the conditions of ‘feeling strongly for each other’ and mutual consent about ‘being ready for it’, that is, ready for sex as an exploration of physical, personal, and relational feelings. Another strengthening of these conditions can be read in the short-term change in reports of 12- to 17-year-old girls and boys on having experienced coitus: in 2012, about one-quarter reported this experience, and in 2017 the one in four had been reduced to one in seven (de Graaf et al., 2017).

Another paradox is in the connection between these rising expectations and demands, on the one hand, and fidelity in relationships lasting for shorter and shorter periods, on the other: increasing numbers of young

people have increasing numbers of consecutive relatively short ‘try-out’ relationships, and adults also tend to increasingly live in relationships of serial monogamy. Rising expectations of love and rising demands on each other did not prevent divorce rates rising, quite the contrary; but this rise, too, is much more likely to have originated from a rise rather than from a decline in demands for intimacy. These rising demands and expectations largely explain the new emphasis, in this century, on the love side of the lust balance, and also why love has become more difficult, lasting love in particular.

Another paradox is that protests against pornification and sexualisation, even those against paedophiles, are at least to some extent counter-productive because they tend to keep lust-balance questions topical, thus raising the level of consciousness of the erotic and sexual and the level of sensitivity to erotic and sexual aspects of relationships. They are, therefore, instrumental in propelling further sexualisation and eroticisation in the direction of further integration. Accordingly, sexualisation and eroticisation processes have neither stalled nor changed direction, quite the contrary: it seems more likely that they are accelerating (Wouters, 2010). It seems likely, for example, that women will advance their tradition of accentuating sexual attractiveness as they continue to ‘come into their own’ as sexual subjects, and that further eroticisation of sex can be expected from men as they continue to be under the influence of what has been described here as a pincer movement.

Moreover, there is reason to expect that established levels of equality, openness, and intimacy will be maintained and transmitted to the next generation. This reason lies in the likelihood that children and teenagers who are raised and grow up on a certain level of intimacy, openness, and equality will expect and try to develop a similar or, if possible, even higher level in relations of love and friendship with people of their own generation. It becomes their ‘figurational ideal’ (Stolk & Wouters, 1987). From a very early age onwards, these ideals and expectations become deeply ingrained at the level of individual habitus as a relational code and a figurational ideal, providing significant sources of meaning and value in life. Therefore, as they grow up, young people will long to attain at least similar levels of intimacy, warmth, and openness in their own intimate relationships that they experienced in their youth. Usually, they want to improve on this level and set their standard higher.

Surveying the trends sketched in this chapter, I think there is enough ground for the conclusion that, since the 1880s, love and lust have been involved in a process of integration, and also for the hypothesis that the quest for a more gratifying lust balance between sexual and relational intimacy will continue to drive the processes of sexualisation and eroticisation in the direction of their integration.

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The Crisis of “Close Domination”: A Key to the History of Gender Relations?

Dominique Memmi

1 INTRODUCTION

Elias neglected—in his major writings, at least—the massive evolution that took place in the private sphere during the twentieth century. Without children or a wife, he was probably not in the best position to observe it closely in his own life. The interest that it aroused in him is, however, expressed in the fact that he declared in a seminar during his visit to France in 1986 that no revolution was as important in our history as the access of women to an identity of their own in the twentieth century. He planned a book on this question as early as 1939 and wrote many texts (unfortunately lost) (Heinich, 2000). And at the very end of his life, he reaffirmed the important contemporary changes in the status of women (Elias, 2014).

He wrote also two texts devoted exclusively to power relations in the private sphere. The frequent allusions, especially at the beginning and the end of these two texts, to current events show his interest despite everything in the contemporary history of the private. However, the concern of

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Elias to draw out the lessons of the history makes the first of these texts—devoted in 1980 to the relationship between parents and children—conjugate rather to the past in the analysis of this specific social relation (Elias, 2010). The second text, devoted in 1986, to the relationship between men/women clearly intends to throw light on the present—Elias affirms there that his analysis “remains, *mutatis mutandis*, valid today” but concerns a rebalancing that took place, in the ancient world (Elias, 2000; Heinich, 2000; Delmotte, 2018). As always, in these two texts, Elias knows how to promote himself as a historian of the social structure at the heart of which the practices he studies take place. It is all the more regrettable that he did not do so—except possibly in a lost manuscript—for the century that was his own.

Florence Delmotte can therefore write in 2022: “In any case, Elias’s historical sociology is rarely called upon to shed light on issues of sexual discrimination or gender inequality outside Elias’s circle of fellows and the work of his followers” (Delmotte, 2022, p. 81). Fortunately, she could add: “Some of the latter have, however, been precursors, be it on gender violence or on transformations of sexuality (van Stolk & Wouters, 1983, 1987; Wouters, 1998). In a second time, articles that are written more by women social scientists have explored the seemingly non-obvious but challenging connection between feminist, gender and figural studies (Brinkgreve, 2004; Bucholc, 2011; Ernst, 2022), notably in the field of sports given the concomitant rise in the 1980s of gender studies of sport and of the Eliasian-inspired sociology of sport” (Liston, 2006, 2018; Mansfield, 2008; Delmotte, 2022). But let’s return to the uses we can make—in our own way—of Norbert Elias’s work itself on that topic. To what extent then can Elias contribute to an understanding of the evolution of gender relations in the twentieth century? I argue that he allows us to grasp the two fundamental movements at the heart of this history. He remains precious to the analysis of gender relations when the two concepts of “civilization” and “individuation” that he conceptualized are applied with discernment. It is necessary to rethink and rework these concepts, but also to *combine* them in order to adapt to what happened in the last third of the twentieth century.

We discover then that Elias is useful for understanding the current evolution of gender relations for mainly three reasons. From the end of the 1960s, has firstly taken place a kind of generalized “don’t touch!”, a growing resistance *to any hold on the body or to forced physical proximity inside any relationship where there is an imbalance of power*. This shift in the

threshold of sensitivity to physical control in those situations is what I have called a “crisis” of “close domination” (“domination rapprochée”). This particular accentuation in the process of individuation has obviously affected the status of women both as sexual objects and as procreative bodies, but also... as managers of authority relationships.

In the more specific area of procreation, moreover, the history of gender relations was recently marked too by the succession of two regimes of feminine self-control. The first regime—a remarkable rationalization since the end of the 1960s of our women’s relation to the biological at the beginning of life could be analyzed by Elias as an expression of the emergence of a procreative “second nature”, a rather severe self-control of impulses and desires in maternity matters. The second type of self-control could be theorized by Cas Wouters, as a passage, in the 1990s, to a less rigid, less demanding procreative “third nature”, leaving room for improvisation and adaptation. Here, it’s the hold of “civilization” over the biological whose profound modification is at stake.

2 PHYSICAL CONTROL OVER BODIES IN A STRUCTURALLY IMBALANCED RELATIONSHIP: AN OUTDATED POWER DEVICE?

Much of my recent research has aimed to show that, from the end of the 1960s in particular, has taken place a growing resistance *to any hold on the body from an external authority*: the state, various institutions, or other individuals. One would thus have to deal with a very particular accentuation intervening in the history of the process of individuation. By this last expression, Elias designates the fact that social agents take themselves more and more as individuals, strongly encouraged to do so by the institutions that see them as such. This goes far beyond gender relations, but this evolution has come to affect it in a particularly intense way. Thanks to this singular phase in the process of individuation, the “libido dominandi” was forced to become, officially, less physical. A kind of “no touch!” seems to have settled in our societies, in many ways (Memmi, 2021).

This shift in the threshold of sensitivity to physical control is what I have called a “crisis” of “close domination” (“domination rapprochée”) (Memmi, 2008). Everything happens more precisely, as if an authority (individual or institution) could not know today how to seize the body of another—even for such a “good cause” as health or education—without

mobilizing a “third party” (as psychoanalysis would say) to supervise or chaperone the interaction, and that this third party is often ... the word. One can always make a claim on the body of the Other in some respects, but only if one “asks”. Hence, today, the obsession with “consent”, with signed authorizations, in hospital wards or funeral fields, etc. This is what I have described as “government by words”, the extension of which can be seen in schools and hospitals, but not without often putting the members of these institutions in difficulty as it is very time- and energy-consuming (Memmi, 2003a, b, 2008). We’ll come back later to the consequences this has had on the status of women.

Everything happens, therefore, as if the imbalance of power can only last if it is no longer experienced in physical proximity. One is then going to start to qualify as “violence” (“obstetrical violence”, “educational violence”) many social practices previously and greatly trivialized. The year 1960 tended to question any domination: the thing is well known. But I claim that they particularly attacked the physical dimension of the social relation in that it appeared as a specific and privileged ally of power and domination. It is the conjugation of a *structural imbalance in the relation* and the *hold over the body* and/or the physical proximity that would be constructed little by little as “intolerable”.

This change was particularly noticeable in the case of women. The withdrawal of the *state’s physical hold* on its subjects during the twentieth century is general, but it has had specific effects on the female condition. If the hold that the state exercised over the lives and bodies of men in Western societies was eroded with the gradual lifting of the obligation to “die for one’s country” (crystallized by the end of military service in the 1960s and 1970s in Anglo-Saxon countries, and thirty years later in European countries),¹ the decline of the state’s dominion over women’s lives and bodies was illustrated by the retreat, albeit unevenly across nations, of pro-natalist policies. More generally, with the disqualification of state-sponsored eugenics, the state’s hold on the reproduction of individuals—and therefore on the female condition—has been called into question.

Secondly, the withdrawal of the physical hold of *institutions* over individuals was not less strong, taking, for example, the form in schools of the

¹ In Great Britain (1960), Australia (1972), and the United States (1973), followed by Austria (1995), France (1997), Portugal (1999), Spain (2001), Italy (2006), and Germany (2011).

lifting of physical sanctions (already clear during the nineteenth century and continued in the second part of the twentieth, notably since the Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1959),² followed by the surveillance of any sexual proximity between teacher and pupils, and the rigid prohibition against even photographing children without parental authorization. Each time, it is the real or potential hold on the body of the other—or its simple representation—that is in question here, rather than the social or intellectual authority of the teacher.

Similar evolution occurred in institutions that provide care. Authorizations demanded, after individual discussion, from each patient for any operation (Fainzang, 2006); verbal precautions put in place from one French medical code of ethics to another from 1979 onwards around rectal touching (Memmi, 2003c); handling of babies at birth notoriously softened (Le Dû, 2022) and general resistance of doctors to touch their patients at all (encouraging many of them to seek alternative or traditional healers) (Le Dû, 2022): the massive transfer in the second half of the twentieth century of birth and death, of the beginning and end of life, to the hospital has paradoxically been accompanied by a withdrawal of physical control over users, or more precisely a suspension of physical control in favor of a preliminary dialogue.

And it is especially in institutions that provide care that this “no touching” will have a particular effect on the condition of women, if only because their procreative body has always been the object of particularly intense and continuous surveillance. The evolution of social attitudes around procreation has only made more visible the parallel evolution of thought that has occurred more generally around health. Abortion, contraception, and artificial reproduction: all became possible in the final third of the twentieth century. One could do many things with one’s own reproductive body, on one condition, always the same: to talk about it with a caregiver. This “government by the word” was thus systematic around women (Memmi, 2003b). It is especially in this field of procreation that the institutions and the state increasingly took women as individuals, and that women increasingly took themselves as such. Laws and devices allowed for a new fact: women, whose destiny was until then sealed when their body went into gestation, could from now on waver, hesitate, reflect, decide, and *officially* contest this perspective. This introduced a

² As early as March 2005, thirteen states had passed a law prohibiting all forms of educational violence.

real, small anthropological revolution: the promotion of the feminine inner self as legitimate and “interesting” in the face of the vagaries of reproduction (Memmi, 2016a). And the refusal of the procreative body as a destiny did not stop there. In the medical order, today it takes the form of suspicion of any “obstetrical violence” (Audibert, 2016; CIANE, 2016; Ferrer-Ferrer, 2019).

The withdrawal of institutional control over women’s bodies has produced a logical counterpart: a trend towards feminine (and feminist) reappropriation of the female body in all its reproductive dimensions. It has taken the form of a revolt against all the problems linked to female fertility and considered until recently as “natural”. Menstruation (Thomas, 2018; Hanafi, 2017; Houseman, 2010), endometriosis, miscarriages,³ stretch-marks, contractions and bleeding after childbirth,⁴ ailments accompanying menopause (Charlap, 2019): all the parts and functions linked to the female body are now the object of female reappropriation or protest.

Finally, and most importantly, the withdrawal of physical control over the Other has extended, and in a particularly strong way, to another institution: the family. Now any modification of this has obviously more powerful effects on the feminine destinies that depend more on it, materially or subjectively. Like boarding schools, barracks, and psychiatric institutions, the family home itself has opened up, especially for the benefit of those who were the most captive; that is, the dominated members of the family: the live-in servants (Memmi, 2019), the children, and the women. Between 1965 and 1975, the reform of matrimonial regimes in many European countries opened up the labor market to a socially broader spectrum of married women. But this daily exit can also open other, definitive exits: for example, in France this new financial autonomy, allowed (alongside the introduction of divorce by mutual consent) women to ask for divorce more often than the men, a trend that has continued.

What regresses or is contested in the relation is the total capture of a person, body included (and more recently, psyche included). The physical hold serves henceforth as repulsing and objectifying the intolerable nature of the relation: in France, for example, two-thirds of the 110 married

³ Cf. the petition “*Fausse couche, vrai vécu*” (Miscarriage, real life), launched in 2022 and having gathered more than 20,000 signatures.

⁴ Cf. on YouTube the numerous spots dedicated to this subject. For example: “*Why women need to be informed about post-pregnancy and postpartum suffering*”, found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HdUKkqdel9Q>.

women who sent letters in 1967 and 1968 (in order to have them selected for a radio program devoted to women and couple relationships) to Menie Grégoire⁵ say that they are beaten, violated in a way or another, sequestered, or simply deprived of freedom. And in this social institution, too, the place of the physical hold tends to be substituted by the “word”. It is the negation of the word that, in addition to the unequal distribution of domestic tasks, composes the figure of the “unsatisfied” in the letters to Menie Gregoire. Imposition or physical limitations, authority *without word and without reply*: that is what shocks from now on. This trend has continued unabated, and #MeToo is just a recent international extension. “#MeToo!”, “#MeToo!”, I want to speak out, to add my testimony, because the same thing happened to me in terms of direct physical domination. #MeToo crowns an era of complaints in all their forms (before the courts, or simply in the public arena). Women have finally gained collective access to one of the three ways (defined by Albert O. Hirschman) of managing a social relationship that is considered problematic: *Voice*.

The fact that words matter now between the protagonists of a power relationship goes hand in hand with another, but often unnoticed fact: the change in the relationship to authority in favor of verbal negotiation is taking place to the benefit of those who have the aptitude. The educational shift, for example, at the end of the 1960s is reflected in the fact that in France children are now allowed to speak at the family dinner table, notes Antoine Prost, but it is mothers who will benefit most from it because of their own dispositions (Prost, 1981). In the family, as in society, the transformation of the relationship to authority offered women new social opportunities: the professions of mediation (around the family but also around patients), of coaching. In the midst of their professional path, women will draw from it the possibilities of reconversion that men hardly have, but above all access to forms of objective social authority (Vildard, 2022), which will influence gender relations at the margin. This is particularly clear in the French hospitals, for example: a man in charge of the interviews provided for by law in a family planning clinic would be an exception. Here, it is overwhelmingly women (midwives, family counselors, psychologists, even nurses in abortion services) who are in charge of this “government by word”. Without doubt quite traditional for women, this government of women by women has been professionalized

⁵ French journalist and writer, known in particular for having hosted a listening and speaking radio program called “Allo, Menie” from 1967 to 1982.

in their favor (Memmi, 2003b). The evolution of the modes of exercising authority in modern western societies has benefited concretely and professionally to women.

Last but not least, intolerance and hostility to the conjugation of a *structural imbalance in the relation* and the *hold over the body* should by necessity affect women more greatly as highly coveted sexual objects: hence the remarkable success of the #MeToo movement. And there again, it is not the power exercised by the director (in a cinema of “authors”) or the producer (in a capitalist cinema) on “his” actors that has been mainly contested, but the sexual impositions that may accompany it.

3 A PROCESS OF CIVILIZATION AFFECTING “LIFE ITSELF”

The accentuation of the process of civilization—in the specific form taken in the second part of the twentieth century—also produced an effect, but more contrasted, on gender relations.

By belatedly extending his hypothesis of a civilization process to death, Elias has in fact imperceptibly inflected his initial theory, defended in his work *On The Process of Civilization. The Loneliness of the Dying*, published forty years later, takes into account not only the relation to a drive (such as the sexual drive, hunger, or aggression) or to “animality”, but also the relation to “life itself”, to take up the definition given by Michel Foucault of the object of contemporary biopolitics (Foucault, 1976–2018). It was there, I suggest, to touch upon a neuralgic element of the change that occurred at the end of the twentieth century. In the final third of the twentieth century, life itself, the simple human biological given, in its spontaneous, natal, or lethal proliferation, has been the object of a simultaneous *refusal* (which can be related to the process of civilization) and of a massive *individual reappropriation* (which can be related to the intensification of the process of individuation). It is “life itself”, Nature in its autonomy, that may take the place of the State or the Institution as the object of social contestation and which becomes therefore, persecutory. The perpetuation or the reproduction of life qua life became the target of a new form of self-control at the same time as an enterprise of reconquest. The relationship to living matter has been transformed, giving rise to a growing obligation to control it (civilization) and, more precisely, to have it controlled by the subjects who are its bearers (individuation).

The effects on gender relations are obvious: the “pro-choice” movement is gaining strength over the “pro-life” movement. However, it is

important to understand that “pro-choice” concerns the end of life as much as its beginning, as shown by the rise in power of the pro-euthanasia and cremation movements during the 1980s. In any case, in the 1960s, we witnessed a growing refusal among women to see their whole condition constrained by their fertility and their feminine “nature”. What creates a problem here is not so much the naturalness of the body as what it threatens: the autonomy of each individual. The object of a growing intolerance is the idea of *the biological as destiny*, again curbing our growing tendency to take ourselves as sovereign individuals. The “civilization” of our relationship to the body would constitute a condition for the pursuit of our “individuation”. This taking in hand by the individual of the use of his own body relates to the counterpart associated in Elias’s work with any increase of self-control: shame. Shame is associated here with any failure to control one’s own life. In the same way that Elias described the shame of the dying man in the face of the decay of his body (Elias, 1986), and of the vision of which he imposes on his relatives, I discovered in the field not shame linked, for example, to the fact of taking the Pill (to authorize sexual intercourse), but of *not* taking it: that is to say, of giving one’s body to its “normal” procreative destiny (Memmi, 2003b).

Hence, an enterprise of rationalization of our relation to the biological was undertaken in the 1960s. Abortion, the morning-after pill, IMG, ICSI, PMA: many are the indications of this rationalizing medicalization. The child made for another person, abortion—like suicide—existed before, of course, but in a low-key and small-scale way. The decade 1965–1975 symbolizes the abandonment of furtive tinkering with oneself. Contraception and abortion can be read as an indication of the officialization, rationalization, and standardization of hidden practices: “Your miseries are over; no more waiting every month for your period in anguish, no more having to pretend to have headaches, no more counting the days”, proclaimed the French Movement for Family Planning (MFPP, 1982). As for the control of the end of one’s life (with the publication of the book *Suicide, Instructions for Use* in 1982, very quickly banned but immediately replaced, in 1983, by *Le Guide de l’Autodélivrance*, explaining how to give oneself a death both efficient and painless), we pass to the rationalized era of physical intervention in oneself. The second half of the twentieth century is moreover a time of unprecedented development of biology as a science. What intensifies, then, is the control over the “interior” as well as the “exterior” of nature.

The recourse to the two general processes (of civilization and individuation) conceptualized by Elias—but with the specific inflections they took on in the final third of the twentieth century (an individuation by “body” and a self-control on “life itself”, i.e., on the normal biological given)—allows us therefore to contextualize and read differently the recent evolution of gender relations, and to attribute it to fundamental movements, at least as much as to the feminist activism and/or the evolution of masculine mentalities. To say that these evolutions are also the result of very powerful underlying movements has a definite advantage. It allows us to escape excessive specialization in the analysis in order to grasp the “supporting structures” in the history of gender: the “supporting structures” of biopolitics, to speak like Foucault or the “supporting structures” of the history of self-control, to speak like Norbert Elias.

4 TOWARDS A “THIRD NATURE” OF PROCREATIVE SELF-CONTROL?

Historical mutation did not stop there. It was accompanied, about twenty years later, by an internal resistance, generating a certain ideological ambiguity. All those who had militated for this intense rationalization of the relationship to the body were overtaken by a new generation hostile to this absolute control over the internal “nature” of women. The ideal of the former had been—according to a formula heard in my fields of investigation—that of the “perfect contraceptive”, while the latter, while maintaining procreative control as their goal, are worried about the contempt for body and “nature” that this rationalization implies: doesn’t the Pill make you fat? Doesn’t it affect the thickness of the blood? Hence the search for alternative, more “natural” modes of contraception in the crucible of what will become ecofeminism. Some of these go so far as to return to the rhythm method of calculating the cycle, or to base their sexual relations on the state of their vaginal mucus. Those who advocate perfect pain control with epidurals are answered by those who view its systematic application as an act of “obstetrical violence”. They were previously those who, after decades of birth experienced as “too risky” at home, have come little by little to swell the population adopting safe delivery at the hospital. They are opposed to those who, at the beginning of the 1990s, have provoked a small and paradoxical resumption of home birth, but in a way that now insists on its “naturalness”.

Here again the evolution is spectacular. The majority of women were still giving birth at home in France in the 1950s. In less than 25 years, 99% of them began to give birth in hospitals! Home births had become a statistical minority by 1951 in Quebec, 1952 in France, the 1950s in Switzerland, and the 1960s in Italy, to the benefit of hospital births. In Great Britain, the decline was spectacular from at least the beginning of the 1960s: from 30%, home births dropped to 12% in 1970, and less than 5% by 1975. In France, the evolution is also well dated: the proportion of home births, which was 80% at the beginning of the century, fell to 45.60% in 1952, then to 13.90% in 1962 and 1% in 1974, a figure that is now fairly stable. But superimposed on this background picture of an intense rationalization of procreation, there has been a slight general increase in home births: in Italy (from 0.2 to 0.4% today), as well as in England (from 1 to about 3% in 2008), in France (from 1 to 1.3%), and in French Canada (from 1% to less than 3%) (Memmi, 2016b).

But this "return" to home birth is not a return. It bears only a distant resemblance to what could persist in the countryside because of geographical isolation or the cost of hospital care. This undergone home birth, a sign of community isolation and deprivation, cannot be compared to the *chosen* home birth, initiated in the second half of the 1970s by militant midwives: it testifies to a new flexibility in relation to norms, typical of the "third nature" theorized by Wouters. Similarly, those who thought bottle-feeding was liberating are now opposed by numerous young women who wish to breastfeed. In the 50 years since La Leche League was founded (in 1957) in the United States, the number of women who breastfeed in that country has increased from 20% to 71%, and there are now 3,000 breastfeeding advocacy groups in 77 countries. The pressure of institutions and of the new pro-nature activists is not enough to explain the reversal of these social practices: absolute procreative self-control—with the shame that each of its failures generated—is giving way to an appropriation of oneself that accepts trial and error, approximations, secondary adaptations, without any question of renouncing the "achievements" of the previous era.

This looks an awful lot like a succession—but here *in the procreative domain*—of the "second nature", this rigid and demanding self-control theorized by Elias (and whose model, in the sexual order, e.g., would be represented by the Victorian period) into a "third nature". This more flexible and random self-control is theorized by Cas Wouters (its model, in the sexual order, would be represented in the majority of Western countries by

the 1920s and then the 1960s). It is indeed the great discovery of Cas Wouters that this general “informalization” occurred in our relationship to constraint and self-constraint (Wouters, 2007, 2009). The history of the corset, a torture long imposed on the female body, represents the simplest illustration. The imposition of the corset signals the advent of very severe self-control, of the “second nature” type, imposed on the “first nature” of women; that is to say, on their bodies, which are observed in all their possible “slackening” behaviors, dietary, sexual, and so forth. The abandonment of the corset does not prevent its return in more flexible forms: less painful, less demanding but chiefly more voluntary, according to the soft injunctions of fashion. Elias had also seized upon this evolution by observing the increasing removal of swimsuits on beaches, which he interpreted as the sign of a more interiorized form of sexual self-control.

One could say that the same thing happened—but with small differences that deserve to be analyzed—regarding *procreative* self-control. The radical disqualification inflicted on women who have “erred” and on their “bastards” has been succeeded, first of all, by the incredibly powerful self-control represented by women’s daily and lasting recourse to the “perfect contraceptive”. Then came, at least in certain social circles, an “ecological” self-control of procreation that is more flexible, more random, and more personal, one that is, however, made possible by the previous system. Just as a home birth that goes wrong can be remedied by a quick transfer to the hospital, the “failure” of a procreative self-control by monitoring mucus can always be corrected by recourse to the so-called “morning-after pill”.

This succession of types of self-control obviously has massive effects on the daily life and the incessant vigilance of women. But it has also had, curiously, an impact on the alliances that women have been able to form in their favor in the recent history of gender relations. Contraception, abortion, and soon PMA: in the context of the “second nature” of the 1970s, procreative self-control rested above all on women and their allies, those that—in order to obtain this rationalization accompanied by legalization—they then found for themselves: certain doctors, and the state. “Dialogue” before birth between father and child via haptonomy, home birth, water birth, father’s first care of the baby, skin-to-skin carrying by the father: in the context of the “third nature”, part of the burden previously devolved to primary caregivers now falls upon men. Exemplary in this respect (because, except for birth accidents, these practices were

unknown until then in the whole of the West)⁶ is the entry of men into the delivery room in the 1980s and the cutting of the umbilical cord. The advent of the "second nature" has thus favored a first stage of female emancipation through *their autonomy* in procreation, while the "third nature" precipitates a second stage through a certain *sharing of the "procreative work"*. This procreative work weighs especially on women in the case of medically assisted procreation, but this should not erase the intense sexual regulation demanded from men. The passage from the second to the third nature in the history of procreative self-control thus signals—as much as it requires—an additional stage in the egalitarianism of gender relations.

This interesting shift requires more precise investigations into the sociological identity of the social segments seduced by this more flexible and shared (but also more risky and random) form of procreative self-control, which I have called "third nature" self-control. What distinguishes these "new" women from the activists of the first generation, who nevertheless seemed to belong to the same strata of the small, literate middle class? Is it a simple generational fact? A different relationship to culture and politics? Again so many investigations need to be conducted here.

5 CONCLUSION

Even if Elias did not pay close attention to it, there is no reason why relations of social domination should be spared by the *contemporary* accentuation of the individuation process. In their relation to institutional power, to authority or to the domination exercised over them, an important evolution occurred for individuals—and for women in particular—in the final third of the twentieth century: an increase in the threshold of sensitivity to any unmediated physical hold. This last will be, from now on, represented most often (but not only) by the word. In spite of his distance from the theories of domination, Elias's work helps thus to explain this history. We need his notion of the "individuation process", to underline the specificity of its present accentuation: the fact that individuation takes the body as the privileged place of its realization. And we need Elias's notion of the "civilization process" to underline its present stage: the fact that the "libido dominandi" in general—and not just for men—now has to be

⁶Oral survey in 2010 with French specialists in the history of birth: Marie France Morel and Jacques Gélis.

expressed now through words. Speech, the words, the formal consent as a preliminary and sufficient necessity before any hold or any physical proximity can be established: that's what one tends to firmly believe today. And in order to achieve in this self-control, we imagine individuals—and women in particular—capable of dialogue and consent.

Such an evolution could only have a massive effect on all those who were precisely the object of a hold by body or forced into proximity: particularly in the private space, and on the dominated members of the family. It is not surprising, then, that women have gained access to the word, then to public contestation on questions that had nothing to do with the political preoccupations of the suffragettes or with the demands for feminine economic independence, but with the free physical disposition of oneself: in matters of sexuality, of procreation, and today of everything that hinders feminine physical freedom. Any appropriation by another than oneself, any physical approach coupled with an asymmetric relation, is the object of suspicion or contestation: the MeToo movement constitutes only the most recent illustration of it. In our societies, the idea that the body remains the tool of destiny seems to have become both “good to think about” and more and more difficult to bear. Hence the deep mutation—among other things!—of the relations between the sexes.

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The Changing Nature of Maternal Affects: Process-Sociological Perspectives on Counselling Literature About Maternity in France (1960–2020)

Emma Tillich

I INTRODUCTION

Since the 1960s, reproductive practices have changed and this change affects women in a very marked way. This is the case in France as in a variety of Western countries. The use of contraception has become widespread, medicalised and feminised.¹ There has been a “rationalisation” (Charton, 2011) of reproductive behaviour: births have become the

¹96.9 % of women used contraception in France in 2013 according to the INSERM-INED Fecund survey. In France in 1968, 57 % of women aged 18 to 49 used withdrawal, or no contraception at all (25 %): (Le Guen et al., 2017).

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object of planning and anticipation.² Finally, births are fewer in number and occur later in the life cycle of individuals (Régnier-Loilier, 2007). But how has the interiority of the first people concerned by procreation, women, been affected by these changes? Despite the existence of synthetic historical works on maternity (Knibiehler, 1997; Knibiehler & Fouquet, 1980), and a recent dynamism of gender studies on the issue of contemporary maternal emotions (Bueskens, 2020; Donath, 2017; Plant, 2010), the question of reproductive and maternal internal mores and affectivity is very little explored in its diachronic aspects.

Could Eliasian processual sociology be useful to analyse these changes? Three theoretical frameworks could possibly be interesting: individualisation, informalisation and civilisation processes. Women have indeed experienced an unprecedented emancipation in both private and public life (Thébaud, 1996; Wouters, 2004, also Wouters in this volume). It has surely had repercussions on the forms of maternal affectivity. Have maternal affects become more individualised? Are they subject to more flexible forms of regulation? This conceptual framework also incites to pay attention to the new social norms that accompany this apparently more liberal regime. Women are caught up in a set of social and medical norms that compel them to “control themselves” in terms of contraception and reproduction. Taking a contraceptive and self-monitoring of the fertile body are widely normalised practices, often passed down from mother to daughter and monitored by the medical establishment. This is particularly the case in France, where contraception is largely the responsibility of women and women are particularly medically monitored in the context of a medical consultation that constitutes a veritable French medical institution: the gynaecological follow-up. Deviations from the norm—for example, abortion—tend to be strongly stigmatised as a lack of control over the reproductive body (Bajos & Ferrand, 2006; Watkins, 2001). How have women internalised these new social norms? Have the perception, feelings and conceptions of the reproductive function changed?

This quite heavy and numerous set of questions and hypotheses seem difficult to test. An interesting source to start with could be the normative literature (counselling manuals, specialised press) on motherhood. Norbert Elias and his followers make extensive use of normative literature

²The share of unplanned births, e.g., was divided by 3 between 1965 and 1985 in France. About 2 out of 10 births are unplanned or “poorly” planned since the mid-1980s in France (Régnier-Loilier, 2016).

(Elias, 2000; Mennell, 2013; Wouters, 2004, 2012), which is also widely used by historians of emotions and sensibilities in general (Frevert et al., 2014; Matt, 2002; Stearns, 1994). This source has disadvantages: its socially situated and normative nature prevents us from considering it as a reflection of general mentalities. But although partial,³ this source is of great value as a starting point to raise questions and hypotheses. It is a continuous source over long periods of time, its large public and normative nature leads to the clarification of certain commonly shared norms and values. It is thus capable of providing a synthetic and clear—although, again, partial—information on the evolution of the rules of conduct that regulate “personality structures” (Elias, 2000, p. 4), as they are formulated by the ones that decide to speak out in writing on the subject.

The aim of this chapter is to analyse what French counselling manuals on motherhood reveal about women’s affective evolution in the face of the activity of childbearing—procreation and motherhood. It is therefore a twofold reflection: how to adapt process-sociology to women facing motherhood and procreation, and what status to give to this particular historical source that are the counselling manuals.

2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

The analysis is based on a qualitative comparison of several corpuses of advice literature. A total of 43 general pregnancy guides were systematically consulted. Attention has been paid to the general structure of the book, the illustrations and certain passages of interest concerning maternal affects, systematically identified for each book (passages on the announcement of pregnancy, adapting to it, the first interactions with the child, breastfeeding, etc.). They are almost always explicitly aimed at women, although an increasing number of pages are devoted to fathers. Apart from the 1960s–1970s, books that were collected without discrimination due to their scarce number, the main corpus is exclusively based on

³The limitation of this source is that it is not representative of the social world in general, because these books are only read by a certain part of the population and because what is said may be the product of the author’s personal world views. Partial solutions to these limitations are to consult an important number of textbooks, chosen from among the general public textbooks, to always be attentive to the social characteristics of their author. The best remains to cross this source with others (non-normative unsolicited intimate discourses, or historical statistics about opinions and values, secondary literature about the history of women and maternity).

works that have been published at least two times. It indicates a sufficient readership and as the developments can be systematically compared. Eleven guides with more specific perspectives (whether they focus more on the psychological aspects of becoming a mother, or adopt an explicitly original and romanticised perspective, or on the contrary, an offbeat or even critical one) were also consulted. Ten guides from the 1960s and 1970s on marriage and the emotional, sexual and conjugal life of couples or young girls, written by doctors or lay people, were also consulted.

The analysis finally draws on the French magazine *Parents*, which has been systematically consulted for three years a decade since 1979, on a number of French maternity advice website and articles and on a few Google Books” systematic requests.

The starting point is the change that is most striking when reading these manuals: the changing representations of “maternal nature” and of its placement at the heart of the fulfilment of motherhood and femininity. This will be followed by an analysis of the changing regime of mores and sensibilities surrounding motherhood, using and discussing processual sociology.

3 NATURE, INSTINCT, FERTILE BODY: CHANGING REPRESENTATIONS OF “MATERNAL NATURE”

The counselling literature reviewed takes an almost consistently positive view of motherhood. It tends to present it as an exceptionally happy experience, a biographical climax, an essential moment in the fulfilment of their femininity. According to some authors they “naturalise” the female maternal role, that is, they present women as inherently inclined to make and raise children, staging a female taste for motherhood (Delaisi de Parseval & Lallemand, 1978; Von Munchöw, 2011). This pattern of analysis applies very well from a global perspective, but a closer inspection reveals an evolution of these social mythologies glorifying motherhood. In the latest discourses, the “naturalness” of the female maternal role is no longer based on the same rhetorical devices. We move from a system of representations in which the desire to have a child is seen as a direct emanation of a feminine “nature” explicitly named as such, to a more implicit system, which retains this idea, but in concealed, or even attenuated, forms, and of a rather great complexity. Individuality in terms of maternal affectivity seems increasingly recognised. How far do these transformations go?

3.1 *The Transformations and Moves of the Maternal Instinct*

“Maternal instinct” is a locution that can be understood in a number of ways: it implies the idea that women are naturally destined to be mothers—that the desire for pregnancy and motherhood is in their nature. It contains both the idea of a “procreative impulse”, if not compulsion to motherhood (Touraille, 2011), and an innate foreknowledge of the child’s needs. The social representation of a maternal instinct as a compelling force in motherhood for women thus seems to have faded, and displaced into the post-maternity, a biographical moment during which the idea that women are naturally inclined to care for their children is still alive, albeit controversial.

The oldest works often contain traces of the notion of maternal instinct in its strongest sense. For example, they mention that “The child then finds its place more easily, the third vertex of the triangle that the “feminine” woman instinctively desires” (Lyard & Trocellier, 1963, p. 50) or that “a man and a woman instinctively know that there is no adventure more beautiful or more exalting than that of creating a new human being together” (Lepage & Pagès, 1973, p. 87). Two works on marriage and sexuality written by medical doctors also use the notion of maternal instinct very explicitly (Bernières, 1964, pp. 302–303; Bourgas, 1964, pp. 179–180): “The maternal instinct is the need which compels the normal woman to motherhood, and which, once satisfied, leads her to protect the child physically, psychologically and morally” (Bernières, 1964, p. 276).⁴

In works containing this expression, references to the maternal instinct disappear or are modified. For example, Laurence Pernoud’s *J’attends un enfant* contains this expression several times, and explicitly develops the maternal instinct on numerous occasions. However, these passages were modified over time, so that the “maternal instinct” was no longer mentioned at all in the 2020 edition. One passage thus underwent significant changes, staging in 1974 that (Pernoud, 1974, 1984, 2020):

⁴ An additional search in Google Books tells us about the relative liveliness of the representation of maternal instinct in the 1960s–1970s: out of four books on parenthood or contraception found in the search, three seem to defend the idea of a “maternal instinct”, and mobilise it under its strong programme, i.e., defend that women would have a kind of “natural” instinct to procreate (Géraud, 1963; Muldworf, 1972; Sayaballian, 1968; Sommermeier, 1975).

The desire for motherhood corresponds to such a deep instinct that even the woman who had sworn not to want a child, unconsciously desires it. And it is not uncommon to see a woman who had cried when she saw herself pregnant become in the space of a few months very maternal. Nature, in its desire to preserve the species, does things well. (Pernoud, 1974, p. 247)

In 1974, the term “maternal instinct” is understood in the strongest sense: maternal instinct does not only designate maternal feelings arising after the birth of the child, but describes a kind of irresistible (biological?) “drive” to procreate. Desire for pregnancy and desire to have a child coincide: pregnancy is even conceived as an experience with the power to “convert” women to motherhood, as if the biological and the psychological were in symbiosis. Nature—to which an intention is attributed (the “desire to preserve the species”)—is said to express itself through the psyche of women. This particularly explicitly constraining phrase about women being the vehicles of one of “Nature’s” laws disappears ten years later. The rest of the passage, however, is kept almost intact until 2020, when the discourse becomes quite different:

Desire for pregnancy and desire to have a child do not always coincide. A woman may seek above all to prove to herself that she can become a mother, to reassure herself of her fertility and her power to procreate, without necessarily thinking about a child. And even if the desire to have a child has been very present, pregnancy can be disturbing. (Pernoud, 2020, p. 87)

No mention is made of “Nature”, but simply of feminine emotions, which are conceived as having a high degree of complexity.

On the contrary, many of the more contemporary books consulted do not include any reference to maternal instinct. Another book of reference is, for example, generally critical of the notion of “maternal instinct”. The authors prefer to speak of “maternal love”—conceptualised with a mix of psychoanalysis and John Bowlby’s theory of attachment (Frydman & Schilte, 2017). The same is true of contemporary motherhood advice websites. The LaurencePernoud.com website does not include a single reference to the maternal instinct. While other sites, such as Parents.fr and MagicMaman.com, do include some, almost half of these references are critical of the idea that there is a maternal instinct. Others present a weak programme of the idea of maternal instinct, compared to the representations contained in Laurence Pernoud’s, 1963 book: it would only concern

women who are already mothers, and would consist of a sort of innate prescience of the child's needs. The expression is used, for example, to describe the birth of feelings of maternal love after the birth of the child, or to comment on striking anecdotes: for example, the case of women who saved the life of their child following the intuition that he was ill. The change seems to have taken place in two stages, the first being a disappearance or attenuation of references to the maternal instinct in its strong programme during the 1980s. The second is the appearance of mainstream references explicitly critical of the maternal instinct from the 2010s onwards.⁵ A more systematic and in-depth analysis should reveal the exact timing and contours of this change.

3.2 *An Increasingly Discreet "Nature"*

There has also been more general change in the mode of reference to "nature". The discourses about it have become more discreet and implicit.

The transformations in Laurence Pernoud's book are exemplary of this change. "Nature, in its desire to preserve the species, does things well", mentions the book in 1974, referring to nature as a force of constraint, the fate of individuals. This passage disappears in 1984. Much later, the word "Nature" also disappears from the developments on child conception. As of 2010, the passage "How Nature creates a human being", present since 1963 is renamed "At the dawn of life" (Pernoud, 1963, p. 95; 2010, p. 112).

This type of reference to "nature" seemed to be quite common in the 1960s–1970s books. "Pregnancy [is] a natural process, part of [women's] biological destiny", states a pregnancy book (Lyard & Trocellier, 1963, p. 40). "Before they were born, nature prepared them for sexual union" states another book (Lepage & Pagès, 1973, p. 19). In another 1976 book, the authors devote a chapter to female beauty during pregnancy (Bonnet & Bonnet, 1976, p. 46) and draw an assumed parallel, maintained over many lines, between a pregnant woman and a "ripe" ear of wheat, that is, an object subjected to biological laws. "[...] *The modern*

⁵ And even in the form of feminist maternity guides for the general public: Greusard Renée (2016), *Enceinte tout est possible (Pregnant, Everything is Possible)*; Lili Sohn (2019), *Mamas. Petit précis de déconstruction de l'instinct maternel (Mamas. A small guide to deconstruct maternal instinct)*; Pihla Hintikka and Elsa Rigoulet (2019), *Le guide féministe de la grossesse. Pour des futurs parents libres (The feminist guide to pregnancy. For free parents-to-be)*.

farmer, whose main concern is the final harvest, knows nothing so beautiful as a vast field of golden ears of corn under a radiant sun. [...] It is beautiful to see a well-laden, heavy ear of wheat gently bending its head" they write, referring to the pregnant woman (Bonnet & Bonnet, 1976, p. 46).

For comparison, a keyword search was conducted on two recent books of reference: *J'Attends un Enfant (I'm Expecting a Baby)* (Pernoud, 2021) and *9 mois. Attendre bébé (9 Months. Expecting a Baby)* (Frydman & Schilte, 2017). It reveals that the word *nature* is used a lot by these books—it seems to establish a particular semantic climate evoking intimacy, connection to the body and the world. However, the word as used does not imply a compelling force on individual behaviour.⁶ These uses of the word “*nature*” are not so much to designate a destiny for women as to describe biological processes that “facilitate the becoming” (Memmi, 2014, p. 307, see also Memmi in this volume) of women: the unfolding of the female cycle, pregnancy and childbirth as biographical events for women, and the process of attributing genetic characteristics to individuals. In the literature on women’s desire to have children, for example, references to *nature* remain, but they become increasingly imprecise. They are often not logically linked to the rest of the discourse. Some of these statements take on the appearance of philosophical reasoning questioning the existence of a possible “procreative instinct”, but they remain quite imprecise and not logically articulated (Iszak, 2006, pp. 20, 32–33):

Like all living things we reproduce to perpetuate our species. We do not know well the links between what we believe to be the fruit of our free will and the dynamics of the human species. Do we act according to our individual freedom or according to the group to which we belong? The question is, what are the consequences of our actions on ourselves and on those around us. (Iszak, 2006, p. 20)

The desire to have children can also be physiological and *linked* to the famous “biological clock”. (Mimouni, 2020)

⁶The first search in Laurence Pernoud’s book returned 27 occurrences of the word “*nature*” (and 69 of the word “*natural*”, “*naturally*”). Only 9 occurrences refer to *nature* in the symbolic sense of “human biology”, or “the whole of living things”. For example: “Immediately, *nature* begins a new cycle of 28 days” (Pernoud, 2021, p. 120) is used to refer to the arrival of menstruation or “During the dilation, it is thus necessary not to upset *nature*, that you remain quite relaxed” (Pernoud, 2021, p. 320) is used to describe the smooth progress of childbirth.

3.3 *A More Implicit Glorification of the Fertile Body*

The fertile, procreative body, the main character of this literature, is finally glorified in different ways depending on the period. *J'attends un enfant* shows once again a very clear change. At the beginning of the period, it includes traditional representations of the female body (Pernoud, 1963, p. 20; 1974, p. 27; 1984, p. 31; 2001, p. 31; 2010, p. 14; 2020, p. 14), where sterility is a negative, shameful, mortifying state, and fertility and even fertilisation are highly valued (Héritier, 1996):

Menstruation is never more than a missed appointment [...] Very often pregnancy leaves the organism in better condition than it found it. (Pernoud, 1963, p. 20)

From the 1984 edition onwards, the passage concerned becomes much vaguer, referring only to the “possibility” that pregnancy leaves the body in a better state. This idea is definitively dropped from the 2001 edition onwards, which mentions in a more neutral but perhaps not without normality way that “pregnancy is a normal part of female life”.

In another 1970s book, the author, very much inspired by psychoanalysis, makes lengthy developments on menstruation, affirming their importance in the genesis of the primal maternal feeling in the young girl, and their fundamental role in the sensation of being “fully female” (Roland-Michel, 1970, p. 68). Another book argues that pregnancy, in essence, makes a woman beautiful. “A physical transformation. BEAUTY”, is stated in the title of the chapter containing the argumentation (Bonnet & Bonnet, 1976, p. 46).

These representations of the fertile and pregnant body appear only in attenuated form in the most recent books. One looks, for example, in vain for passages on menstruation in the genesis of the primary maternal feeling in the young girl in more contemporary works on the desire for a child, even though they too are inspired by psychoanalysis. The books write much less on the specific beauty of the pregnant woman, and do not attach explicitly a value to it, other than positive emotions:

Mothers-to-be often have a special glow [...] surely due to the inner fulfilment, the happiness, the pleasure of expecting a child. (Pernoud, 2020, p. 91)

If we can identify a glorification of the fertile and pregnant female body in recent works, it would be rather implicit. For example, it involves the use of photographs that highlight the pregnant female body and often the figure of the “pregnant woman” subject at the same time.⁷ The photograph of a pregnant woman placing two hands around her belly is typical of the iconography of post-2000 pregnancy books. These two hands, which seem to protect the mother’s belly, also have the visual property of forming a frame, thus highlighting it.

The glorification of the fertile body is also to be found in the general economy of the works, which tends to place great emphasis on the temporality of the nine months of pregnancy, conceived as a “marvellous adventure” (Delahaye, 2016, p. 11), a sort of inner feminine journey.⁸ Many recent books emphasise the temporalities of pregnancy, as their organisation is structured around the nine months of pregnancy, emphasising a certain number of key biological stages—fertilisation, major stages of uterine development, the child’s first movements, preparation of the foetus for childbirth, etc.—sometimes detailed week by week.⁹ These biological temporalities, which seem to be taking on an increasing importance, thus propose a real incorporation of motherhood by the woman,¹⁰ but what is ambivalent is that these new forms of “naturalisation” leave room for women’s individualities.

Maternal instinct, nature, fertile body: the representations have changed. There has been, if not a decline, at least a marked reduction in the explicitness of certain representations of maternal nature. It is specifically those implying an absence of individual autonomy and self-determination who have been subjected to a change. This renewal of

⁷Except for the photographs not showing the woman’s head, which represent almost a third of the book covers studied. For an example of book cover, see: <https://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb44519495w>, website consulted on November 11, 2024.

⁸Laurence Pernoud’s work thus draws a clear parallel between the biological temporalities of pregnancy and the psychological temporalities of women. From 1974 onwards, a chapter appears which treats the trimesters of pregnancy as so many psychological “seasons”: the first trimester corresponds to “uncertainty” and “adaptation”, the second trimester to “happiness at being pregnant”, and the third trimester to “withdrawal” into herself and her child by a woman in a hurry to give birth, “more indifferent in the emotional domain” and also “intellectually”.

⁹This is the case for almost all books consulted after the 1990s.

¹⁰The prematurity of a child can even lead to attachment problems by preventing the mother from properly carrying out her “psychic work” of preparing for motherhood, mention the authors of *9 mois, Attendre bébé*: (Frydman & Schilte, 2017, p. 322).

representations suggests a renewal of the social constraints and moral regime associated with motherhood. The use of processual sociology seems appropriate to analyse this change.

4 THE MORAL REGIME OF PREGNANCY PRACTICAL GUIDES: FORMALISATION OR INFORMALISATION OF MORES?

The second step is therefore to mobilise the theories of processual sociology (individualisation, formalisation and informalisation processes) and to take an explicit interest in the problems posed by the application of this theory to pregnancy counselling manuals. The first thing to note here is that partial nature of the source does call for some caution, as it should be expected some degree of discrepancy between the social rules formalised in these manuals and the social rules prevailing in the rest of the social world. We will therefore refer to the social processes of individualisation, civilisation and informalisation *as they are appear in these pregnancy guides*, and not as they exist in the social world in general. For contextualisation purposes, we also cross-referenced these analyses with the general conclusions of a set of historical and sociological works. We nevertheless believe that although not *representative* of the general mentalities, the very synthetic and normatively explicit pregnancy counselling book raises a set of questions about processual sociology. How is it applicable to the history of women in general and mothers in particular? The dynamics presented here indeed possess a few specific features, and their coexistence is in itself a specific trait.

4.1 *Prescribed Emotions for Mother's to Be: Overall Greater Liberty but Some Remaining Constraints*

The first general tendency seems to be the liberalisation of the emotional rules explicitly or implicitly contained in these manuals.

At the beginning of the period, female emotions tend to be presented as automatically generated by the state of pregnancy, and strongly positive. In 1963, Laurence Pernoud's book presents the female feelings at the announcement of pregnancy, after the doctor has "said yes" and announced the pregnancy to the woman:

You are sure of it and your joy is great, you are expecting a child. You are already making a thousand plans. You are thinking about its layette, its room. (Pernoud, 1963, p. 23)

The previous passage presents female emotions as automatically generated by the announcement of the pregnancy, turned towards domestic organisation, and invested by a form of sacredness.¹¹ The descriptive tone is also injunctive: according to William Reddy's terminology, it is an "*emotive*", that is, a linguistic statement about a feeling aimed at influencing the speaker's, or the interlocutor's, feeling.¹² If, however, she does not show immediate joy, the author sternly reminds her to control herself:

But if, by chance, your doctor's "yes" has confirmed not your hope but your fear, if you are disappointed instead of happy, you need to get your act together. [...] Perhaps you will be obliged to give up a job that you are interested in? Perhaps, but very soon you will discover a new one, that of a mother, more exciting and more demanding than any other [...] Stop weighing up the pros and cons as if it were an economic deal. (Pernoud, 1963, pp. 19–20)¹³

Other books from the same period prescribe the same style of emotional control: "Try to live in a cheerful, calm, relaxed atmosphere, as this

¹¹ The lexicon also seems to be inspired by Christianity: the use of the word "joy", which is typical of Christian words, and the somewhat unusual turn of phrase, "your joy is great", suggest Christian spirituality. This is confirmed by the fact that in the introduction to the text the author quotes theologians on the question of the appearance of the soul in the foetus. She also speaks of the "spiritual responsibility" of the mother-to-be (p. 10).

¹² William Reddy (2009, p. 104), *The Navigation of Feeling. A Framework for the History of Emotions*.

¹³ Pernoud (1963, pp. 19–20) This call to order, which is particularly long in the text, takes up more space than the descriptions of "joy" at the idea of being pregnant. The development of positive maternal feelings seems here to be invested with a particular urgency, a particular necessity, which echoes the material context of female pregnancies in the 1960s: as abortion was not allowed, many women found themselves pregnant without having wanted to be, in a situation of distress that was difficult to live with. The author's solution to this "problem" of psychological distress following pregnancy is to urge women to reform their feelings. The insistence of this call to order here seems to serve to re-establish the social order, in the face of an issue that was already in the media in late 1960s and 1970s France (Pavard, 2012). This theory appears to be confirmed by the fact that the 1974 edition, contemporary with the debates on the legalisation of abortion, does not include any passage on women's emotions directly at the announcement of pregnancy.

will have a big impact on your baby's nervous state. [...] Live calmly and prepare joyfully, with your husband, for the arrival of your Baby" (Lereboullet, 1961, p. 6). A bit later, a book conceptualises maternal feeling as an almost mystical current capable of converting a woman to motherhood: "The pregnant woman is driven by a powerful current [...] she will let herself go without reserve [...] she will truly be love" (Bonnet & Bonnet, 1976, p. 49). Even the most reluctant woman can be converted: "it was enough for [a woman who refused her pregnancy] to be able to express the happiness that was manifesting itself within her [to accept the child]" (Bonnet & Bonnet, 1976, p. 45).

The more time passes, the more the literature consulted seems to present female emotions as complex and diverse, and to present the necessity to accept the negative ones. There is no longer any trace of explicitly formulated injunctions to accept the child, or of pathologising the female lack of desire for a child. From 1984 onwards,¹⁴ Laurence Pernoud's book, which seems to be largely inspired by psychoanalysis,¹⁵ presents them as *intrinsically* complex, ambivalent by definition.¹⁶

There are few words that resonate so strongly in a woman's mind as "I am expecting a child". From the moment she is sure she is pregnant, many contradictory feelings come over her. It is never simply "I am very happy" or "I am very depressed". Even the joy is mixed with fear of the unknown, even the disappointment with pride in being able to have a child. (Pernoud, 1984, p. 31)

Towards the end of the period, the books become less injunctive with regard to female emotions, especially before maternity. They sometimes say little about it. Others are very chatty on the subject. Valorising and naturalising statements on female desire to have a child seem to stand side by side with acknowledgements of the existence of a lack of desire to have a child (Frydman & Schilte, 2017, p. 18).

¹⁴And after a total silence on female emotions when the pregnancy was announced in 1974.

¹⁵In particular the writings of the much quoted psychoanalyst Monique Bydlowski.

¹⁶In the quoted extract, this ambivalence of female emotions offers only an apparent liberality. This discourse actually mitigates the possibility of child rejection, as the book tends to mention it as a possible "phase" of pregnancy. Refusal is further presented as likely to turn into acceptance later in the pregnancy. This is the previously quoted passage about the maternal instinct being aroused by the child's movements, which disappears in the 2020 edition.

Negative maternal emotions after birth also seem to be increasingly taken into account, albeit in a very variable way depending on the book. Laurence Pernoud's book gives increasing space to postpartum depression, which is given a specific section as early as 1974, extended in subsequent editions. Many other books also devote one to three pages to post-partum depression, often insisting on the importance of treating it in order to preserve the mother-child bond: "This depression, if it continues, could have consequences for the child. [...] It is essential to have recourse to a specialised consultation so that the mother-child dialogue can be re-established as soon as possible" (Frydman & Schilte, 2017, p. 431).

However, a few details suggest that in today's emotional regime as it is presented in these books, post-maternity emotions seem to be more constrained than pre-maternity emotions. While some books mention the mother's fear of losing her "identity" (Pernoud, 2011, p. 29), her freedom or her professional autonomy when the pregnancy is announced, these "individualistic" affects are not mentioned most of the time after the birth of the child, when the focus is on the mother's psychological and physical availability to the child. The differential treatment of child refusal and maternal regret in counselling literature also raises questions. Child refusal is sometimes mentioned in pregnancy books, often mentioned in books on the desire to have a child, and several specific books about child refusal do exist since the late 2000s. Maternal regret, on the other hand, is not. The appearance of specific books is later and they remain rare. As they expressed themselves in those books, individualisation and informalisation of mother's affective mores seem more complete before motherhood than after motherhood. Is it the "cause of the children" (Garcia, 2011) that serves as a limit to female individualisation? This lends credence to the thesis put forward by the psychologist and sociologist Petra Bueskens that in contemporary Western societies women are free as individuals and constrained as mothers.¹⁷ So what kind of individualisation process has affected women? Could it be that it affects mothers and non-mothers differently?

¹⁷In the sense that they would be subject to different normative regimes when they take on the role of mothers and when they do not: for Bueskens, the child welfare argument would serve as a massive limitation on women's freedoms (Bueskens, 2020).

4.2 *Emotional and Moral Changes Associated with Birth Control: The Formalisation of a Moral Code?*

While the theory of the informalisation of mores seems broadly applicable, other details lead us to think of the first Eliasian theory of formalisation in the form of a desire for increasing control over the procreative body. They suggest that the control of the reproductive body made possible by liberalised and medicalised contraception has been accompanied by emotional and moral changes, which consist in the formalisation of a moral code concerning reproductive self-control.

The first component of this change seems to be the self-evident character—and what seems to be the moral dimension—acquired by reproductive control as presented in the books. In counselling manuals, sections dedicated to contraception after pregnancy are appearing, which are becoming more and more extensive and detail the various existing contraceptive methods (the pill and the IUD, sometimes contraceptive sterilisation or natural methods). The prioritisation principle of the presented contraceptive methods seems to be more and more efficacy: withdrawal and breastfeeding are less and less developed and valued over successive editions. These technical advises are often accompanied by other advises with an almost moral character. For example, it is mentioned that “as a general rule, you do not wish (and you are right) to become pregnant again quickly after giving birth” (Pernoud, 1974, p. 23), and even more in 1984: “Even if you want to have other children, you do not want to be pregnant too quickly”, arguing that “from a medical point of view alone, pregnancies that are too close together are not advisable because they tire you out” (Pernoud, 1984, p. 403). Medical-physiological justifications are used here to support a social norm that is not explicitly stated: that of pregnancies spaced out over time.¹⁸ From 2001, the book even includes a section entitled “Another baby?”, stating that “our readers often ask the question: ‘from a medical point of view, what is the ideal interval between two births?’”, the author replies that “there can be no precise answer” but that “common sense says that it is preferable that pregnancies not be too close together”, adding that “psychology is well suited to this interval”. The author suggests that it is best to have two and a half to three years

¹⁸ She mentions in 1974 that while it is not impossible “it is certainly rare that ovulation (and therefore the possibility of pregnancy) occurs in breastfeeding women” (Pernoud, 1974, p. 239). However, from 1984 onwards, she insists more on this probability and adds: “So you must take precautions not to get pregnant” (Pernoud, 1984, p. 411).

between each child, allowing the older child to be at the “age deemed charming” and the parents to “feel ready for a new child”. All the books consulted after the 1980s, apart from the shortest ones reduced to few information, or the more narrative ones, include a specific section on contraception, which indicates the importance of these considerations for the authors of these books, and probably for the readers.

The second component of this change seems almost contradictory with this concern for contraceptive efficacy. There is a tightening up of certain sentimental rules concerning the arrival of a child. While the older books all mention the case of parents or women refusing pregnancy, a certainly common configuration at the time, this is hardly the case in the more recent books. The affects related to a pregnancy that is present but refused seem to have very little room for expression. Unplanned or “badly” planned births nevertheless represent one-third of French births in 2008 (Régnier-Loilier, 2016), with probably ambivalent feelings expressed by women in this case—an issue that tends less dealt with by recent works.

These first two changes go hand in hand with a fairly “civilised” reinterpretation of the desire to have children, which seems to be the logical solution to their contradictions. The representations of this affect have in fact moved from a sort of procreative “instinct” to an emotion that is finally expressed in fairly “civilised” terms, wisely indexed to certain social rules:

Our society nowadays wants a large number of women to pursue a professional career. Their studies, and then their first steps in the world of work, force them to put their desire to have a child on hold [...] When this desire is rekindled, its nature is somewhat different [...] The desire to have a child is then more conscious, more reasoned and reasonable, in short almost always better established. (Rufo et al., 2013, p. 18)

The contemporary version of the notion of the feminine “biological clock” seems exemplary of this change. How can we explain “the late desire to be a mother?”, asks an article by the website marieclaire.com in the same way. “Why does our biological clock no longer coincide with our current desires?” the magazine adds, as if a late desire to become pregnant could be explained by a biological mechanism that should have been set in motion in time, that is, around the socially acceptable age of motherhood, around thirty?¹⁹ The social representation of the female “biological clock”

¹⁹ Available online: <https://www.marieclaire.fr/maternite-tardive,1237566.asp>

that the American essayist Moira Weigel identified in *Time Magazine* at the end of the 1970s does indeed contain this idea of women “worked on by their biology” around their thirties, that is, exactly at the time that our societies now give to procreation (Weigel, 2016). The naturalising representations of the female psyche therefore also seem to have conformed to the laws of the “rationalisation” (Charton, 2011) of reproductive behaviour, allowing them to be rational beings cautious of contraceptive errors and emotional subjects “worked on by their biologies” around their thirties at the same time.

4.3 *Violence and Animality of Procreation: A Change of Sensibilities?*

We can push this analysis of the formalisation of a “reproductive self-control” one degree further. Eliasian theory of the civilisation process indicates that the growth of self-control in Western societies is accompanied by a change in sensibilities. In particular, there is a growing intolerance to certain conducts, affects or attitudes (such as violence), or to certain bodily functions symbolically associated with a lack of self-control and animality. There are some signs of a similar change in relation to the procreative body, which could be linked to the new morality of reproductive self-control mentioned above. As these clues remain tenuous, I present them in all their ambiguity. In order to answer properly to these questions, it would be absolutely necessary to mobilise the point of view of women themselves, through the comparison of a sufficient number of adequately chosen writings or interviews or quantitative data on the evolution of women’s opinions and values regarding procreation.

The books nevertheless contain interesting changes. First, there seem to be greater consideration of the changes in the pregnant body. As time goes on, Laurence Pernoud’s book makes more and more comments, less and less reassuring, on the changes in the female body following pregnancy. Laurence Pernoud, for example, was rather reassuring about varicose veins and stretch marks in 1963’s *J’attends un enfant*, saying that they “can be prevented”. “[Varicose veins] usually regress almost completely after a first pregnancy. This will be less and less true as pregnancies are repeated” states the book in 2020, in a far less reassuring way (Pernoud, 2020, pp. 398–399).²⁰ As many recent books, *J’attends un enfant* also

²⁰ Pernoud (1963, p. 31; 2020, pp. 50, 398–399).

includes a section on post-pregnancy cosmetic surgery from the 1994 edition onwards, in a section entitled “After Birth, What to Do If Your Body Has Changed”, which addresses various postpartum body aesthetic problems, from breasts that remain too large, saggy, or lose volume, to distended abdomens and melasma problems. The author states that she wrote this chapter “at the request of several readers” (Pernoud, 1994, p. 397).

A few elements point to a more general change in sensibilities regarding the “animalistic” side of procreation. As the period progresses, books seem to have a greater reluctance to represent childbirth in its most graphic details. The evolution of iconographic representations of childbirth in Laurence Pernoud’s book is, again, exemplary.²¹ From the 1984 edition onwards, very detailed photographs of the birthing process are included. They show the mother pushing and the obstetrician taking the baby out of the mother’s genitals. These are kept until 2010, when they are replaced by a section on “Impressions and emotions” around the birth, with blurred photographs that show only the two parents, and not doctors or the exit of the baby.

The most recent books include little photographic documentation of the actual delivery. There are photographs of the maternal and paternal upper body during delivery, often smiling, and possibly a small, blurred photograph of the child’s upper body just after expulsion. When recent books do include a diagram of the expulsion, it is always shown in lateral section, with the mother lying on her back. They also stop at the exit of the baby’s head and no longer show its complete exit from the maternal body. By comparison, the diagrams found in the oldest books also show the expulsion from the front (Bonnet & Bonnet, 1976, pp. 154–155), or show the expulsion until the child is almost out of the mother’s womb (Pernoud, 1974, pp. 164–165).

Is this change due to women’s reduced tolerance of violence, or even the reference to the animal condition implied by the event of childbirth—which would explain why they are no longer provided with graphic visual representations of this event? Or is it simply due to the movement towards the humanisation of births, which was particularly active in France between

²¹ This change has also been clearly and systematically observed in the publications on childbirth in *Parents* magazine. While the articles from the 1980s and 1990s show several particularly explicit photographs of childbirth, even in a quasi-frontal view. This is no longer the case from the 2000s until nowadays.

1990 and 2000, and which would explain why medicalised birth is no longer shown as a purely physical event, unconnected with the emotional and social context of each mother?

There is no clear change in iconographic representations of breastfeeding, which does not help to settle the debate. However, certain changes in the details of the textbooks suggest a lesser tolerance of procreation in all its bodily crudity. The clearest change can be seen in the successive editions of Marie-Claude Delahaye's book. In 1989, the book was subtitled as follows: "Your baby is inside you, live with him during his first nine months" (Delahaye, 1989). Later, this subtitle disappears and becomes: "Week by week, live with him his first nine months" (Delahaye, 2000) and then "His first nine months, week by week" (Delahaye, 2016). It is the formulation "your baby is inside you" that has been downgraded. Is it because it refers too explicitly to the occupation of the child's body by the mother's? The same book no longer shows the same images of foetal development inside the mother's body, and no longer comments on this development in the same way. In 1989, the book was divided into chapters entitled "1^{ère} weeks after your fertilisation", "2^{ème} weeks after your fertilisation". The very first part of the book is also entitled "an inevitable process begins: you are becoming a mother". Each chapter is illustrated with a schema of the development of the child in the woman's body, entitled "You, week 10 after fertilisation". In the 2000 edition, the sections of the book are renamed to "1^{ère} weeks of pregnancy", "2^{ème} weeks of pregnancy" and so on. In the 2016 edition, the schemas of foetal development inside the mother's womb have diminished in number (6 VS 9 in 1989, 8 in 2000).²² The anthropologist Marika Moisseeff identified this monstrous imaginary of procreation as an invasion of the body, and a paroxysmal form of animality and degradation, in the science fiction films of the second half of the twentieth century (Moisseeff, 2005). In a previous work, I identified the same type of representations among certain French women without children who wanted to obtain contraceptive sterilisation (Moisseeff, 2005; Tillich, 2019). However, we cannot transpose these conclusions to the general mentalities.

²² The anthropologist Marika Moisseeff identified this monstrous imaginary of procreation as an invasion of the body, and a paroxysmal form of animality and degradation, in the science fiction films of the second half of the twentieth century (Moisseeff, 2005). In a previous work, I identified the same type of representations among certain French women without children who wanted to obtain contraceptive sterilisation (Moisseeff, 2005; Tillich, 2019). However, none of these conclusions can be directly transposed to the general mentalities.

5 CONCLUSION

Firstly, I have analysed how the representation of motherhood changes in these works. The naturalisation of the female maternal role is still present, but no longer relies on the same rhetorical devices. There has been a decline in the specific social representations implying an absence of individual autonomy and self-determination (such as the maternal instinct, or the constraining “nature”, or the glorification of the feminine fertile body). In terms of moral regime, the change is twofold. First, the books show an individualisation and informalisation of maternal affectivity, with a greater variety of personal emotions in relation to the onset of motherhood being allowed (from joy to anxiety, from refusal to the most intense desire for motherhood). However, this individualisation and informalisation seems more complete before motherhood than after motherhood, which led us to wonder whether it was or not limited by something. Could it be the “cause of children”, as French humanities on which I base these reflections (Bueskens, 2020; Garcia, 2011)? Could it be that the individualisation of women has been slowed down in the area of motherhood by the individualisation of another dominated member of the family: the child? Secondly, this “informalisation” of mores seems to be sustained by some process that looks like formalisation in the version pointed by Norbert Elias in its earliest works. The books show evidence of a certain moralisation of reproductive self-control—which does not overshadow the naturalisation of the maternal role, as it seems to be accompanied by the emergence of new unthinkable events (the total refusal of a pregnancy that is already here) and new social representations (the biological clock, which is said to work on women around the age of thirty). There could also be a change in sensibilities towards the procreative body, that is, a growing aversion to the animality and biological crudeness of the procreative process. However, the evidence remains tenuous. To answer these questions, we would need to mobilise the views of the women themselves, ideally through quantitative diachronic data.

To conclude, there are several advantages to apply processual sociology to the question of the evolution of maternal internal rules of conduct. This renews the problematisation of social constraints on motherhood, by paying attention to the interface of socio-cultural rules and women’s interiority. This makes it possible to understand the evolution of women’s assignment to motherhood, as it is (now mostly?) carried out in the intimate sphere, even pushed into women’s psyches. The question of how

processual sociology applies specifically to women is also raised by this research object. In view of the observations made in these counselling manuals, it is indeed questionable whether women's mores have undergone specific socio-historical processes, touching to their individualisation and their relationship with their bodies. This object also raises the particularly debated question of "how civilisation processes have continued into the 20th century" (Wouters, 2020) again, by drawing attention to the increase in the threshold of disgust for certain bodily functions, a subject less discussed by theories of informalisation.

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“Is It True That Women Are Sexually Harassed in Our Country Too?” Discourses on Sexual Harassment in the Polish Magazine *The Mirror* from 1980 to 2020

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One of the aims of social justice movements like #MeToo and Black Lives Matter is to raise social awareness and sensitivity toward the ubiquity of violence and discrimination.¹ Growing interest in the oppression underpinning everyday life has accompanied the expansion of the concept of

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violence to incorporate its less “obvious”, though interrelated forms—from structural violence to micro-aggressions.² The actions and policies against sexual harassment seem to reflect this process of expanding the meaning of violence by recognizing experiences of women as well as those who do not fit into the patriarchal gender order.

In this chapter, I describe how discourses on sexual harassment developed from 1980 to 2020 in the Polish lifestyle magazine *The Mirror*. Since sexual harassment, rather than being limited to sexual assault or sexual coercion, encompasses a wide range of violations, I claim that changes in the discursive construction of this category serve as a valuable indicator of social sensitivity to gender-related violence and discrimination. I start with a recap of previous research on sexual harassment in processual sociology. Then, I describe the source of my data and the historical scholarship on sexual harassment in state-socialist Poland. Next, I analyze the association between sexual aggression and the “uncultured” behavior of men from the lower social classes and the introduction of the category of sexual harassment. Then, I proceed analyzing the following discourses on workplace harassment: a comparison between the agency of Polish and American women, a discursive undermining of the reality of sexual harassment, a high-profile case of sexual harassment in institutional politics, the concept of boundaries and the role of popular psychologists in constructing sexual harassment. I conclude by reflecting on shifts in sensibilities to gender-related violence and describing the expansion of discourse on sexual harassment from sexual abuse in the family, through the sphere of wage labor, to general standards governing relations between women and men in public spaces in Poland.

1 SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN PROCESSUAL SOCIOLOGY

Norbert Elias’s (2000) theory of the civilizing process is helpful when looking at the change in behavioral standards for the treatment of women by men that has accompanied a shift in the threshold of shame and the acceptable expression of emotions. In Eliasian scholarship, sexual harassment was previously mentioned by Cas Wouters (2004), and more recently discussed within the context of the #MeToo campaign (Delmotte, 2019, 2022; Bagiński, 2019, 2021). Wouters argued that discussion on sexual violence come to the fore at the end of the 1970s as one of a number of

² For a critical account of this process, described as a “concept creep”, see (Haslam, 2016).

reactions to the sexual revolution of the 1960s (Wouters, 2004, p. 128). At the time, the scope of violence was broadened to include pedophilia, incest, pornography, and from the beginning of 1980s, sexual harassment (Wouters, 2004, p. 129). Wouters cited Paul Schnabel, who claimed that "[g]reater sexual openness and more acceptance of sexuality had brought sexual abuse into sight" (Schnabel, 1990, p. 16), to describe the process in the aftermath of the sexual revolution in the West, when feminist critique focused on gender-based violence. With respect to Poland, historian Anna Dobrowolska (2021) accounts for a different chronology of sexual revolutions that took place during state socialism. The more gradual process of change in Polish sexual culture, which was observed in other countries of the Eastern Bloc as well (McLellan, 2011), had a different impact upon discussions on sexual violence, but this aspect lies beyond the scope of this chapter.

Wouters viewed the emerging discussion on sexual harassment in the 1980s and 1990s as a sign of increasing demands on the self-regulation and emotion management that were needed to find acceptable ways for both men and women to become intimate while keeping a safe distance at the same time (Wouters, 2004, p. 160). However, he suggested that "for most women the shift in focus toward fighting male oppression did not imply (...) increased demands on self-regulation", meanwhile raising awareness of patriarchal violence often entails quite the opposite. In the face of a significant power imbalance in gender relations, women often exercise more self-control than men to avoid potential violations (Bagiński, 2021). The patriarchal morality that puts responsibility for sexual behaviors on women³ was contested by Wouters in his recent elaboration of dating systems and the #MeToo campaign, where he claims #MeToo broke a taboo on sexual abuse and the corresponding shaming of women by including anger and feelings of injustice in the social code of acceptable reactions to sexual harassment (Wouters, 2019, pp. 76–77).

In her overview of the subject of gender in figurational sociology, Florence Delmotte identified the transformation of sensibility toward gender domination as one of the key issues worth investigating further (Delmotte, 2022, p. 83). In accordance with the workings of the established-outsiders figuration, she pointed out the "sensitisation" of a society resulting from the growing interdependence between established

³For an analysis of Polish expert discourses on women's responsibility for rape, see Kościńska (2021, pp. 100, 146).

and outsider groups that have become less unequal, making their relationships more civilized (Delmotte, 2022, p. 94). As a result of the long-term transformation of the gender balance of power and corresponding changes in behaviors and sensibilities that were voiced in the #MeToo movement, violence against women became less acceptable, though this belief is not well-established in normative codes (Delmotte, 2022, p. 94). For instance, in a backlash against what was seen as a repressive and puritanical moral order brought about by #MeToo, an open letter was published in the French daily *Le Monde*, defending men's "freedom to pester" as a requirement of sexual freedom (Delmotte, 2019).

2 THE MIRROR MAGAZINE

The Mirror is a lifestyle magazine addressed to women either from the middle and upper-middle classes or aspiring to join them that has been published continuously since 1957. It is the oldest Polish magazine of that sort still on the market. In state socialist Poland, the magazine was associated with the Women's League, one of the main state-run women's rights organizations. At the time, *The Mirror* was published biweekly and discussed problems of women and families against the background of the prevailing socio-political situation, as well as matters of culture and fashion. After the magazine was privatized in 1991, it became a monthly and focused more on publishing lifestyle and psychological materials (Jastrun, 2007, p. 87). The specificity of this magazine makes it a valuable source for investigating, inspired by the Eliasian approach, changes in acceptable behavior.

A query covering the period from 1980 to 2020 showed that the issue of sexual harassment⁴ was raised only sporadically, less than, for example, that of domestic violence, which was quite often described in letters to the advice column. In describing gender relations, the magazine focused more on other forms of discrimination in employment, inequality in reproductive labor, gender stereotypes and intimate life. Changes in media and communication accompanying the post-socialist transition resulted in the shifting of a threshold of shame regarding phenomena that were tabooed in the public sphere of state-socialist Poland (Szpakowska, 2003,

⁴ In Polish, 'molestowanie seksualne' is used. It is worth mentioning that the Polish verb 'molestować' ('to harass') has a broader range of meanings than the English 'to molest', which, in its modern usage, usually specifically refers to sexual abuse.

pp. 257–258). Sexual harassment was one of those issues that became more visible in the Polish media in the post-socialist period, though it did not receive a great deal of critical attention, often being conflated, for example, with the office romance (Kubisa, 2004; Łaciak, 2005).

3 HISTORICAL RESEARCH ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN STATE-SOCIALIST POLAND

Previous studies on gender-based violence in post-war Polish society have focused on rape (Kościańska, 2021) and domestic violence (Klich-Kluczevska, 2021). As for sexual harassment, Natalia Jarska (2015) discussed various cases of sexual violence in the workplace in the 1950s, which were disclosed in letters to the press and complaints to the authorities. She argued these cases were considered pathological but not marginal at the time (Jarska, 2015, pp. 176–183). Meanwhile, Małgorzata Fidelis argued that issues of gender discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace were raised in the 1970s and 1980s, but in a veiled manner, as “culturalization” or the improvement of work culture, and without any clear indication that the discrimination of women was a result of gender inequality, as it was being formulated in the 1960s (Fidelis, 2020, pp. 144–145). The role of “culture” or the lack of thereof was reflected in Piotr Perkowski’s (2011) article about the standards of sensitivity towards women in the mid-1970s. He claimed that the Polish press began to write about sexual harassment, though without using that term, around the same time that the activist movement campaigning against this issue started up in the West (Perkowski, 2011, p. 279). On that occasion, Perkowski cited a press article on sexual coercion in a factory and analyzed a column written by an intellectual, who criticized sexual harassment in the public sphere, characterizing it as a form of hooliganism⁵ that was associated with the actions of young working-class men (Perkowski, 2011, pp. 278–279). The classification of sexual harassment as hooliganism made it possible to frame an attack on freedom, personal dignity and human inviolability outside of gender inequality.

⁵ Hooliganism was defined in the Polish Penal Code of 1969 (Art. 120 par. 4) as “offences consisting in a deliberate attack on public safety, health, freedom, personal dignity or human inviolability, on an authority or state administration or on the activities of a state institution or social, on public order, or deliberate destruction or damage to property, if the perpetrator acted in public, and in the common understanding, without reason or for an obviously trivial reason, thus showing gross disregard for the fundamental principles of the legal order”.

4 BOORISHNESS: SEXUAL HARASSMENT BEYOND GENDER INEQUALITY

The association of sexual aggression with “uncultured” behavior typical of men from lower social classes was reflected in a description of sexual harassment on the street, yet without using this exact category. In 1986, an advisor of the column dedicated to *savoir-vivre* responded to the reader:

Monika from Warsaw asks how to react to whistles and the uncivil provocations of boys on the street. It’s best to quicken your step and “freeze” [them with] your gaze. Don’t shout – “What boorishness (*chamstwo*)!” You can firmly state “Leave me alone!” but don’t get into any arguments. (Lady Perfect, 1986, p. 13)

The advice did not frame catcalling as sexual aggression, but rather as incivility and boorishness, which implied a class dimension to this behavior. Apart from denoting vulgarity, “*chamstwo*” used to serve as a derogatory word to describe the peasantry.⁶ The association of patriarchal violence with the lower classes was described by historian Barbara Klich-Kluczevska by citing the example of domestic violence in state-socialist Poland. As a result of the transformation of the social imaginaries of marital relations, childhood and physicality, domestic violence was recognized as violence, because it started to be associated with the margins of society, where people made no attempt to hide it (Klich-Kluczevska, 2021; p. 201). The tabooization of domestic violence resulted in social distancing from this practice for fear of symbolic degradation (Klich-Kluczevska, 2021, p. 163). In the example above, to call a man a “boor” and “uncivil” would be a form of self-defense aimed at embarrassing the aggressor, regardless of their actual social rank. Catcalling was not accepted precisely because it was associated with the behavior of men from the lower classes, who were believed to lack respect for women. It was still explained without reference to gender inequality that allows for the prevalence of similar behaviors in men from all social strata.

⁶ On another occasion Agata Zysiak (2023) noted that when “*chamstwo*” is translated to “boorishness”, the term loses the genealogy of the curse of Ham and its racial dimension, that is important since the nobility was considered to be biologically different from the serfs.

5 INTRODUCING THE CATEGORY OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

In the 1980s, the term "sexual harassment" was mentioned only twice in *The Mirror*, on both occasions in the column of the renowned Polish sexologist Zbigniew Lew-Starowicz. In 1988 he discussed the sexual abuse of parents by their grown-up children (Lew-Starowicz, 1988, p. 6). And one year later, he argued that women's "frigidity" toward men might be a result of sexual harassment experienced in childhood (Lew-Starowicz, 1989, p. 12). The first Polish academic publications also related this term to the sexual abuse of children (Lew-Starowicz, 1992; Pacewicz, 1994), often as an aside in texts about dysfunctional families and alcoholism (Ryś, 1998; Badora & Badora, 1999). In legal discourse, sexual harassment started to be discussed in the context of the European anti-discriminatory laws (Boruta, 1995) and existing legal regulations in Polish labor, civil and penal codes (Warylewski, 1999).

Sexual harassment in the workplace was first described, using this exact term, in *The Mirror* in 1992, in the context of the accusation against Clarens Thomas, a candidate for the Supreme Court of the United States. The article in question reported on a few cases from the Western press, the relevant legislation from the United States, Germany and France, and statistics showing the prevalence of sexual harassment. On the other hand, it mockingly suggested that the incoming ban on office flirting, and the impossibility of objectively determining what constitutes harassment, as women's subjective feelings alone cannot serve as sufficient evidence: "militant feminists can interpret it [verbal harassment] in any way they want. So, is it any wonder that men are afraid? That they just panicked?" (B.J., 1992, p. 7). What is more, it predicted that as a result of anti-harassment state and company policies "It won't be rude, it won't be fun either. It is going to be cautious. Until ladies will miss the delighted male gaze and the accidental brush of the cheek leaning over the desk" (B.J., 1992, p. 7). The article suggests, therefore, that sexual harassment is a marginal issue and all potential romantic relationships, as well as the atmosphere in the office, will suffer from the new regulations. Interestingly, at the end of the article, there was a request for readers' opinion in order to find out how the situation was in Poland, but no letter from any reader was published in the following issues.

Further, in the 1990s, the topic of sexual harassment at work was brought up to show differences in social awareness and sensitivity to gender-based violence between Poland and the United States. In a 1996

interview, which was part of a wider series presenting feminism in Poland, a journalist asked the following question to a member of the board of the Pro Femina Foundation and Vice-president of the Federation for Women and Family Planning, Małgorzata Księżopolska:

- Is it true that women are sexually harassed in our country too?
- Our girls complain that they are pinched at work, that dirty jokes are told in front of them and explicit proposals are made to them. Unlike American women, they are ashamed to talk about it out loud. (Kowalik, 1996, p. 7)

Although the question suggested that sexual harassment might be a phenomenon restricted to Western countries, it also pointed to differences in social recognition of this issue. Księżopolska dissociated feminism from the negative stereotype of the anti-male movement. Strategically distancing herself from claims deemed too radical (“In the US, a man may be unfoundedly accused of sexual harassment”), she legitimized the role of feminist organizations by pointing to their fight against widely condemned forms of crime (“rapists are not punished in our country”). The shame that prevents Polish women from speaking out was juxtaposed with the courage of American women, who at that time were legally protected against sexual harassment in the workplace.

In a similar vein, the Polish-American feminist academic Joanna Regulska referred to the politics of visibility as one of the tools for achieving gender inequality:

Women’s voices in public life make it possible to bring some previously hidden problems out into the open. In the US, a whole range of behaviors described today as “sexual harassment” (molestation, humiliation, discrimination against women because of their gender) have come to light only because women have spoken out about them so vociferously. In Poland, the issue of marital rape, the instrumental treatment of women by various social institutions, including their own families, still remains hidden. (Czartoszewska, 1995, p. 33)

The interview with Regulska is structured according to the following comparison: “American women are completely different from Polish women. More independent, courageous in public situations, free, outspoken” (Czartoszewska, 1995, p. 32). The belief in the passivity and the

“civilizational incompetence” of postsocialist Poles in contrast with the American drive for the grassroots organization of civil society was part of a discourse that was highly influential in the Polish social sciences at the time (e.g., Sztompka, 1993). The leading liberal assumption of the day was that the emulation of American institutions and “habits of the heart” would save Poles despite the macroeconomic social problems resulting from the transition and neoliberal globalization. Regulska suggested women need to self-organize and enter public life, somehow disregarding the legacy of state-socialist policies for gender equality, as these were apparently not implemented in a “democratic”, bottom-up manner, but rather from above (Lišková, 2018). From what is now criticized as a liberal feminist point of view, Polish women were not assertive enough to speak up for their rights. Meanwhile, the conservative-liberal commentators failed to see any issue in women being afraid or reluctant to complain about sexual harassment, because, from those men’s perspective, there was nothing for the affected women to protest about.

6 UNDERMINING THE REALITY OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

A direct protection against sexual harassment at work was added to the Polish labor code in 2004 during the process of accession to the European Union.⁷ One and a half years before, Jacek Dubois, a well-known lawyer⁸ who wrote a law-focused column for *the Mirror*, had criticized the incoming legal change, arguing that EU sexual harassment laws were detached from reality. At the time, this was a popular discourse, in which Polish common sense was contrasted with the technocratic tendency of EU bureaucrats to overcontrol reality, for example, through regulations defining the acceptable shape of fruits and vegetables in commercial trade.

⁷This section was discussed at the workshop “Violence and its Sublimation within the Fantasy-reality Continuum. Between Psychoanalysis and the Theory of Civilizing Process” that took place in the Graduate School for Social Research, Polish Academy of Sciences, December 6–8, 2022. I would like to thank Magdalena Grabowska, Adam Lipszyc and Natalia Zakrzewska for their helpful comments and suggestions.

⁸Jacek Dubois later became an attorney for politicians of the main center-right party, Civic Platform, which in 2012 successfully nominated him to the State Tribunal. His father, Maciej, was also a member of the State Tribunal (1989–1990). In the People’s Republic of Poland, Maciej Dubois was the President of the District Bar Council in Warsaw (1971–1989), during which time he fought to secure the independence of barristers and served himself as a defence attorney in high-profile criminal proceedings.

If we follow the American solutions, our lives may become too calm, because in addition to all forms of sexual coercion, bolder jokes, comments on anyone's appearance or placing a figurine of the "god of love" picked up on holiday on one's desk will become forbidden. (Dubois, 2004)

Usually, the magazine supported the feminist agenda. Therefore, I will discuss this case more thoroughly to show the continuity between the conservative and supposedly liberal political forces in Poland in protecting "normality", decency and common sense from "radical" feminist claims. Dubois challenged the reality of the widespread nature of sexual harassment by pointing to the "American exaggeration" of the problem. This fits into the conservative postcolonial narratives claiming that gender ideology had been imposed on Poland by Western countries (Graff & Korolczuk, 2018). Upon that basis, he criticized the anti-discrimination law as being detached from reality, because it was based on fantasies resulting from oversensitivity, which has a long history of being attributed to women in the discourse on hysteria (Tasca et al., 2012). He admitted that "sexual coercion" exists but discredited what, in the legal definition of sexual harassment, is called "creating a hostile work environment" that impedes an employee's work performance because of their gender. The rationale underlying the concept of a discriminatory atmosphere was dismissed along with "the stereotype that [sexual harassment] affects millions of women". Dubois ridiculed the harm caused by sexist jokes or comments, because "according to psychologists, work is one of the most sexually stimulating activities that people do together" and in the contemporary culture of overwork and long working hours, women have the biggest chance of finding a spouse in the workplace (Dubois, 2004). Apart from casting a heteronormative gaze over the role of women, he made a paranoid reference to Orwell's Big Brother to warn men that every behavior will be closely inspected. He went on to refer to comments made by Aleksander Pociąg, his law firm partner, who had opined that the new regulation would ultimately backfire on feminists, because men would become so afraid of the lawsuit that it would discourage them from having "a more casual conversation" with women or asking them out for a date. By calling dating in the workplace an "extreme sport", he was not only warning of the possible harm that could befall men who preyed on women when sexual harassment laws were in place, but was also pointing to the adrenaline rush associated with it.

The anti-harassment laws were described as a hindrance to men’s freedom and a disaster for “normal” relations between genders, which would increase tension between the reality of sexual violence and allegedly false accusations being put forward by women. Dubois assumed that there was a discrepancy between genuine cases of harassment and exaggerated allegations based on women’s hypersensitivity that had started to be treated seriously in the West. He builds on a naturalized division between rational men and emotional women to argue sexual violence is “extremely difficult” to prove in court because of women’s emotional tendency to claim victimhood. Sometimes rightfully, but on other occasions instrumentally, as “I am afraid that the new regulations, while protecting the truly aggrieved, may, to an equal degree, become a great springboard for financial success or a tool to eliminate a rival candidate for a higher position” (Dubois, 2004). His rationale is consistent with the “ethics of justice”, characterized by Carol Gilligan as a form of morality concerned with abstract principles of justice, according to which men are more likely to be socialized (Gilligan, 1982).⁹ This is even more evident when Dubois’ background in an established family of lawyers is taken into account. While the legal principle of the presumption of innocence remains effective in how criminal cases relating to sexual violence are ruled upon in courts (Grabowska & Rawłuszko, 2020), this presumption is not confined to the courtroom, but also shapes the public discourse on the sanity of women who speak up about their experiences. The author concluded the article by making a sexist joke describing “reverse” sexual harassment analogous to Barry Levinson’s film *Disclosure*. By reducing the problem of sexual harassment to the absurd, he was, in effect, accusing women of a tendency to confabulate by inventing stories of his own. This brings up the question of who decides what constitutes sexual harassment, “because if we are discussing harassment, why not do it from the men’s point of view” (Dubois, 2004). He mocked the issue by turning it upside-down and claimed the status of “proto-victim” for men, referring to the first case of sexual harassment recorded in the Book of Genesis,¹⁰ in which Joseph loses his job and becomes imprisoned when he refuses to have intercourse with his

⁹ Gilligan recently revised her thesis to clarify that ethics of care—the opposite of ethics of justice—is not feminine but humane, against a patriarchal voice bound to gender binaries and hierarchies (Gilligan, 2023).

¹⁰ Together with *Disclosure*, it served as a recurring theme for critics of the gendered characteristic of sexual harassment.

employer's wife. Dubois used these narratives to defend power relations in which men do not have to be responsible for actions going beyond the patriarchal norm of violent behavior.

Seven years later Dubois began an article called "The Harassment of Memory" in a similar manner. He told the story of a young woman who was unable to find a job, went to a psychiatrist and became aware, during the course of therapy, of the reason—she had been molested by a teacher in her childhood. She won a trial brought against the teacher in question and realized soon afterwards that although such molestation had never occurred, she had keenly accepted the psychiatrist's suggestion. She won another trial against the hospital where the psychiatrist worked and lived off the compensation and royalty payments from some books she wrote about this experience. At this point, Dubois makes a confession: "I just made up this whole story, but it could have happened because all the elements are true" (Dubois, 2009, p. 10). Dubois's objective was to criticize how the credibility of alleged victims is taken at face value in courts. Again, women were described as being easy to talk into victimhood, on this occasion by psychiatrists and psychologists, at a time when, apparently, more cases of abuse were coming out in public discourse, triggering moral panic. The breeding ground for these stories was of course the US, treated as some sort of fantasyland. Following an American psychiatrist, Dubois described "false memory syndrome"—a mechanism by which a psychotherapist, as an authority figure, evokes in a client a false memory of being subjected to sexual harassment in childhood (Dubois, 2009, p. 10). The idea that false accusations are ubiquitous once again turns upside-down the feminist claim about structural violence against women.

Until recently, the most effective arguments in divorce cases were alcoholism and domestic violence. It was enough [for a woman] to wait for the husband to come back home drunk, mess herself up a bit and call the police. The court granted a divorce on the grounds of the troublemaker being at fault and evicted him from his home. (Dubois, 2009, p. 10)

The story about the almost automatic ruling of the court against domestic abusers is in itself a fantasy that fails to cohere with data from the period that tends, instead, to show the opposite was the case: unreported domestic violence on a huge scale resulting, among other causes, from a justified lack of trust in how law enforcement agencies deal with such cases (Gruszczyńska, 2007). The extract above also illustrates how Dubois

portrays systemic violence as an oversimplification used by women to dispose of unwanted husbands. He goes on to claim that allegations of domestic violence are being replaced by the sexual abuse of children:

The accusation brings the slandered person into such discredit that his position appears hopeless. In most cases, the accusations are baseless. At one of the prosecutor’s offices, out of a dozen or so submitted notifications, not one turned out to be true. (Dubois, 2009, p. 10)

One can argue that Dubois, as a counselor, looks at each case individually and does not want to make hasty assumptions about the defendant. However, he has no qualms about making broad claims about the credibility of victims of domestic violence and sexual harassment, who in most cases are women. Apart from the fraudulent women who take advantage of the discursive swell of agitation, it is “superficial and incompetent psychological opinions” that are deemed responsible for the “harassment of memory” (Dubois, 2009, p. 10). Women who speak up about their experience of violence are attributed with hypersensitivity or the inability to make realistic judgments by themselves. In Dubois’ view, only the *quid pro quo* type of sexual harassment is abusive, while sexist jokes in the public sphere are harmless behaviors that we should accept we are accustomed to. However, the disbelief with which harassing behaviors constituting a “hostile environment” were being met was affecting the way that all “sexual harassment” cases were being framed in the media discourse. The fact that the articles discussed above appeared eight years apart without the appearance of any critical commentary in a magazine that was generally attentive to gender discrimination shows how deeply the patriarchal norm of violence was embedded in apparently liberal social circles.

7 SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE POLITICAL PARTY SELF-DEFENSE OF POLAND

Cases of sexual harassment widely discussed in the media have a lasting impact on future narratives (Black & Allen, 2001). What was probably the most high-profile case of sexual harassment in Poland involved the co-ruling populist agrarian party Self-Defense of Poland [Samoobrona RP], a vocal critic of the neoliberal transformation that represented the social

groups negatively affected by it (see Gospodarczyk, 2025, in this volume). In December 2006, a party member Aneta Krawczyk disclosed that she and other women were offered a job at the constituency office in exchange for sex with the party's leaders, Andrzej Lepper and Stanisław Łyżwiński. The case was made public in one of the biggest Polish dailies, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, with other media reporting extensively on it (Krzyżanowska, 2008). In the aftermath of the disclosure, *The Mirror* began to publish expert materials condemning sexual harassment at work. In an interview with two psychotherapists and authors cooperating with *The Mirror*, Wojciech Eichelberger and Katarzyna Miller, the combating of gender-related violence was portrayed as one of the objectives of the newly formed Women's Party:

Miller: The latest sex scandal shows how important it is for women's problems to come out of the shadows. For how are we treating women? Half of Poland said Aneta Krawczyk had no shame. (...) I have been a therapist for many years and I know that if all the women who have been harassed in some way by their bosses lit a candle in a window in the evening, we would have quite an illumination. (Cichocka, 2007, pp. 75–76)

The main matrix used here to interpret sexual harassment in the Self-Defense party is gender inequality, which, compared to publications in journals of various ideological profiles, was by far the most anti-violence and anti-discriminatory narrative criticizing patriarchal sensibility to sexual harassment at work (cf. Krzyżanowska, 2008).¹¹ Miller identified the mechanism of shaming women who disclosed sexual violence and attested to the scale of the problem using her professional experience as a therapist, pointing to the causal link between gender violence and mental health. Sexual harassment was constructed as a gender inequality issue often disregarded by those in power, hence forming a new political party which was needed to advocate for women's rights.

¹¹ The class background of party leaders played an important role in other media coverage, which argued for the natural character of sexual violence among peasants, who allegedly cannot be "civilized" (Czapliński, 2017).

8 CONSTRUCTING BOUNDARIES, CONSTRUCTING SUBJECTS

The question of terminological, as well as personal, boundaries was crucial in the discursive construction of sexual harassment. In a 2008 interview with Miller and Eichelberger titled "Is It Harassment Already?", the journalist Tatiana Cichocka asked if it was always possible to discern flirting from sexual harassment. Miller affirmed that it was "always" possible and gave an example of an apparently relaxed and amiable commentary to a female co-worker: "your hand, white and soft, anything it touches turns out well", in reaction to which Cichocka frowns and says: "If I heard this, I wouldn't know how to react" (Cichocka, 2008, p. 101). Miller responded she would be blissful and gave an example intended for a male peer: "I know your masculine mind can handle everything" (Cichocka, 2008, p. 101). To dispel the journalist's doubts, she stated, "It amuses me, because flirting is based on the good old ways. Of course, we can admire a man's hand and a woman's mind", and drew a distinction between erotic and "selfless flirting", such as giving someone special attention and creating a better atmosphere at work (Cichocka, 2008, p. 101). Eichelberger supported this stance by elaborating on "selfless flirting" as a positive and invigorating life energy in contrast with negative feelings resulting from unwanted advances. However, he was keen to emphasize that making an unwanted advance "(...) is not [in itself] harassment. By harassment we mean when someone wants to force someone else into sexual submission by using their position of power, psychic extortion or physical force. Such conduct is malignant, sick and therefore forbidden" (Cichocka, 2008, p. 101). The therapists agreed that experiencing a compliment as harmful depends on the context and individual psychological dispositions. Sexual harassment was also defined in terms of the perpetrator's intent to cross another person's boundaries. Eichelberger highlighted that when feelings of embarrassment, fear and shame are not evoked, the other party probably has pure intentions. But as the above-mentioned example of the journalist's reaction to the "good old ways" shows, the difference between intentionally "selfless" and sexual flirting remains vague, and whether it is considered offensive or not depends on the emotions evoked.

This aspect was developed with a clear reference to consent and the work hierarchy in an interview with the business psychologist and anti-violence activist Majka Jaworska titled "I Do Not Want This Touch". The article contains a legal definition of sexual harassment and seeks to

interpret the impact that patriarchy exerts upon the social reception of this phenomena. The journalist asked how to interpret a past situation when a man attempted to flirt with her at work:

- Jaworska: If you enjoyed these actions and accepted them, and that man was not your boss or direct superior, harassment is out of the question.
- Arendt-Dziurdzikowska: And if in the office where I work, a man hangs up a nude calendar and tells aggressive jokes about blondes...
- Jaworska: ...and it offends you, violates your boundaries? Then you have the right to protest. (Arendt-Dziurdzikowska, 2008, p. 82)

The difference between harassment and “selfless” flirting is clear when the situation is viewed from the woman’s standpoint. However, Jaworska underlined that patriarchal norms prevent the equal treatment of women and serious consideration of their claims. In her view, in order to unambiguously and firmly protest against men crossing boundaries, women needed to break with patriarchal emotional norms and “(...) make friends with [their] anger. Appreciate it. Boundary violation is irritating” (Arendt-Dziurdzikowska, 2008, p. 83). In this discourse, anger breeds strength that is necessary in the fight for rights and safety, as “Only through anger can the energy to protest be found. A woman who listens to her anger bravely solves her problems. She feels that she is angry, she has had enough and will no longer tolerate behavior that does not suit her” (Arendt-Dziurdzikowska, 2008, p. 82). Encouraging women to validate feelings of anger in response to violations of personal boundaries is the only way to contest the patriarchal feeling rules that compel women to feel shame.

In the previously cited article “Is It Harassment Already?”, therapists discussed the origin of sexual harassment in childhood trauma and disrespect for children’s boundaries as being typical of a patriarchy:

- Eichelberger: We prefer not to know how often children’s physical boundaries are violated by parents, uncles, older siblings, friends of the family, doctors, catechists, teachers, trainers... This is where the abuse begins.

Miller: A child has no right to say that they do not want something. They have to learn to bear everything. And the attitude towards parents is transferred to the attitude towards bosses and authorities. (Cichocka, 2008, p. 102)

Indifference to the violent treatment of children was considered the main reason for the sexual harassment of women to remain so widespread and unnoticed. Eichelberger stated that, from a therapeutic point of view, although both parties to an act of harassment are traumatized and were probably abused in the past, one has become a perpetrator and another a victim. As both of them may not be aware of the abusive acts, the new laws and social pressures against sexual harassment are put in place in order to protect those with "victimhood syndrome". This is also the reason for introducing political correctness, with greater caution being displayed toward which words and actions should be used in the workplace. At some point Eichelberger invoked a discourse on false allegations, claiming his male friends who are lecturers in the US have to be careful when being alone with female students. However, Miller stated that "We ridicule political correctness so as not to admit that we haven't grown up enough to apply it", making the realistic claim that no one had gone to jail yet for paying a compliment (Cichocka, 2008, p. 102). The patriarchal pressure of blame, shame and distrust experienced by women who have revealed details of the sexual violence needs to be countered by turning it into a public issue that, in reality, concerns everyone: "We need to make people aware of the fact that we are all victims of sweeping the problem of sexual harassment under the rug" (Cichocka, 2008, p. 103).

The causal link between childhood trauma and future disrespect for an individual's boundaries was linked to masculinity in an interview published in 2000, in which Eichelberger discussed the sources of aggressive behavior displayed by men and the widespread sexual abuse of girls in families:

Arendt-Dziurzikowska: Deep in our subconscious there is a fear of men. We associate masculinity with violence and threat. A man is unpredictable.

Eichelberger: Indeed, men often cannot handle their own sexuality, which means that they can be unpredictable in this matter. Women get it right, they have real reasons to be afraid. Not only because they have painful childhood experi-

ences (...) If you had even one such experience as a child, walking in dark streets can be scary. Because if daddy, grandpa, uncle couldn't stand it, then how can you count on the self-control of strangers. If even the incest taboo was no safeguard, then what could you expect on the street? (Arendt-Dziurdzikowska, 2000, p. 79)

In this narrative, men's lack of self-control over their sex drive results in women's fear and the association of masculinity with threat and violence. Eichelberger sums up his argument by claiming that "We should aim for a situation where a woman can even walk naked on the street if she wants to, and she won't be subjected to our harassment, let alone other symptoms of the loss of control" (Arendt-Dziurdzikowska, 2000, p. 80). His argument is in line with the premises of the Eliasian civilization process, in which the individual's self-control increases by internalizing external constraints as internal constraints. As a result of the growing interdependencies in modern societies, individuals have less and less recourse to the use of physical violence, over which a monopoly is claimed by the state. But since men's aggression remains a common phenomenon, it has to form part of patriarchal habits unhampered by the actions of the state. States have not monopolized the violence occurring in relations between men and women, leaving the former with power over the latter. Although states have always been interested in the crime of rape, the late criminalization of marital rape suggests that the motivation behind it was never women's rights and autonomy. In this context, public shaming remains an external constraint, the effectiveness of which depends on social norms in a specific environment.

After the publication of the articles analyzed above, which appeared partly as a result of the sexual harassment case within the Self-Defense of Poland party in 2006, the magazine only returned to the issue in 2016, when a report by the STER Foundation on sexual violence against women in Poland was extensively discussed. By asking respondents about specific behaviors, it showed the prevalence of sexual harassment in public space generally, rather than restricting it to the workplace (Sonik, 2016). Data from this report were disseminated during the Polish edition of the #MeToo action and are still being quoted in the media as indicators of the scale of the problem. After #MeToo, Hollywood actresses giving

interviews in *The Mirror* were usually asked about the sexual harassment of women. Although the campaign initially began as a response to sexual harassment, abuse and rape in the film industry, it influenced the mainstreaming of knowledge about sexual harassment, as well as the reality of everyday violations in public spaces. As Katarzyna Miller put it in a column following the #Metoo action: "If a man has thoughts in which he objectifies a woman, he should keep them to himself. And also, seriously think about himself. The abuse of women is total" (Miller, 2018, p. 16).

Miller's advice for men to maintain their self-control and evaluate any sexist beliefs they held manifesting themselves in the sexual objectification of women relates to the interpretation of the #MeToo campaign inspired by Elias's thought (Delmotte, 2019). In #MeToo, as a result of the vast circulation of the truth-discourse about the scale and prevalence of sexual violence, the patriarchal beliefs and norms on what constitutes violation were countered in the public discourse (Bagiński, 2019). Thus, the MeToo movement influenced the popular understanding of sexual harassment that is not restricted to the workplace, at the same time showing the historical and cultural construction of sexual violence.

9 CONCLUSIONS: SHIFTS IN SENSIBILITIES TO GENDER-RELATED VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION

I have described how sexual harassment, a term initially used to address sexual abuse in families, started to be used in *The Mirror* to "uncover" gender-related violence in the workplace and later, in public spaces, broadly conceived. Nobert Elias's ideas are employed in this case not to argue for the demise of violence but rather for it to be reconfigured by showing how the introduction of the category of sexual harassment reframes certain behaviors, previously considered "uncultured" or masculine, as gender-related violence and discrimination.

In his overview of historical studies on violence, Philip Dwyer deliberates on two crucial questions: who decides what violence is and how does one interpret it? (Dwyer, 2017, p. 12). The historian suggests that it makes sense "to examine its forms and functions, and the changing attitudes toward those forms and functions" (Dwyer, 2017, p. 20). A critique of sexual harassment denaturalizes the stable meaning of gender-related violence and shows how attitudes toward it have been changing in recent history, with culture wars over how violence is constructed being one of

the results. From the perspective of figurational sociology, sensitivity to gender domination is increasing along with the more even balance of power between men and women (Delmotte, 2022). Among other reasons, this is a result of the recognition of violations that were previously belittled or considered harmless, because they were experienced predominantly by women and children.

Shifts in the threshold of shame and the acceptable expression of emotions in the public discourse which, according to Szpakowska, took place during the postsocialist transition in Poland, were echoed by Tomasz Jastrun, a long-time columnist in *The Mirror*, who reflected as follows on how the changing discussion on violence in everyday life was affecting how people evaluated the past and present:

Nowadays, we are lifting the quilt that covered the injustices of the world, such as the discrimination of women, mobbing (i.e. harassment at work), beating children, and various forms of sexual harassment. (...) In our country this lifting of the quilt is taking place with a characteristic historical delay. And in the process, we are discovering how paternalistic the country we live in is. (Jastrun, 2004, p. 24)

Apart from the fact that the “historical delay” Jastrun mentioned is a form of a national self-description, increasing visibility in the mainstream media is believed to impact social norms. Therefore, it can be argued that social awareness of patriarchal violence increased during the period investigated in this chapter. However, the discursive construction of sexual harassment resulted in the formation of different sensibilities to gender-related violence and discrimination that have become politicized. Even though Poland was obliged to introduce EU directives on gender discrimination to its labor code and finally did so in 2004, Polish governments of various ideological standing persistently dismissed previous initiatives of feminist NGOs and MPs aimed at securing equal status for men and women, among which was new legislation on sexual harassment (Saryusz-Wolska, 2008, p. 36). Columns by the conservative-liberal lawyer Jacek Dubois illustrate how the unspoken pact between liberal, post-communist and conservative governments in Poland after 1989 operated: they secured a conventional, criminal view on gender-related violence, in which it is an extraordinary and brutal event allegedly obvious to anyone who happens to witness it.

The feminist reformulation of gender-related violence, among other things, emphasizes its ordinariness (cf. Evans & Berlant, 2018). Efforts to

link structural violence with acts such as lewd comments at the workplace has created a conflict on who has the power to define what sexual harassment is. Feminists who highlighted types of violence and discrimination other than "typical" sex crimes have been accused of hypersensitivity and being detached from reality, as if words were not capable of producing physical effects on the body. Discourses in *The Mirror*, at least since the disclosure of sexual harassment in the Self-Defense of Poland party in 2006, explicitly criticized the cultural reasons for this approach. Eventually, sexual harassment increasingly became the subject of wider discussion, broadening the popular meaning of violence and its growing impact as a normative category that delineates socially acceptable behavior.

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New Rules of the Game? Towards a Figurational Analysis of Negotiations on Gender and Diversity

Stefanie Ernst

*Those who have grown up with privileges,
may feel disadvantaged by equality.
—(Alice Hasters)*

1 INTRODUCTION

Whereas during the *Golden Age of Marriage* patriarchal marriage laws, restrictive moral concepts and institutional restrictions ensured the supremacy of so-called old white men at the expense of the extensive

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exclusion of (especially married) women, from the Second World War on the working woman and mother has turned into the representative of the second Women's Movement (Ernst, 2022). Transformed into a self-confident power woman, this type is still a common projection screen and even a concept of the enemy of anti-genderists, who now (in times of emotionally charged battles on wokeness, recognition and participation) loudly scandalise their discomfort with the gender debate (Beck et al., 2021). An unintended side effect of the current essayistic gender and diversity disputes (see, e.g., Moore, 2020; Edsall, 2022; Aronowitz, 2022) is that categorisations of deficit difference can re-enter through the back door and make the collective efforts for equality more difficult. Indignantly and without regard to the person, on the one hand, (unproven), privileges are alleged for upwardly mobile employees. On the other hand, there are ongoing warnings about a 'splitting of the workforce through diversity measures' (Bernau, 2021). If there is hardly any space for a critical debate between the buzzwords of 'cancel culture' and 'political correctness', the struggles for the recognition of equality in all its diversity will be not only more complex but also more emotionally charged than ever. This is reason enough, in view of the increasingly complex mixture, to take a look at the debates and practices on gender and diversity, in and at work, from a detached perspective.

However, women's egalitarian expectations are systematically frustrated in a time when gender and work have become more flexible, but continuous gender pay, gender care and gender pension gaps still prevail. This is particularly noticeable in the representation gap in top professional positions. But things have also changed in favour of the women and the gender equality has increased as well (see Treibel; Brinkgreve and van Daalen in this book).

Moreover, aside from lip services, as part of an undirected but nevertheless intended social change, the public pressure of social liberation movements has manifested in institutional practices in order to govern equality policies in the last 40 years. The Works Constitution and Equality Act and the General Equal Treatment Act (German AGG) illustrate, for example, that, contrary to former times, equality and diversity have to be implemented in the working world. Gender is an essential core dimension that has already led to the formal legal opening of middle management and top positions (McRobbie, 2008). A now reflexive and strategically used gender knowledge has evoked remarkable negotiation processes and gender conflicts in various public and private companies. In view of this

‘transformation of the working world’ (Ernst & Becke, 2019), however, the question remains to what extent temporal connections and relationships interact with diversity and gender. Especially, it is unclear whether and to what extent management instruments, such as equality policy and diversity management, are associated with an organisational-cultural change which can further improve the opportunities for progress, as well as for modifying and sustainably enforcing legal rules.

In addition, other group-related aspects are increasingly coming to the fore, which generate reflexive and strategically used gender and diversity knowledge, leading to comparatively classic but also new negotiation processes and conflicts that can develop a considerable momentum of their own, from which the collected case studies have reported on. Recapitulated in terms of sociology of knowledge and processes, peculiar interactions of intended administrative action become visible, which sometimes have unplanned side effects. They have meanwhile transferred the conflicts about recognition and participation, which have become more complex, to new play levels. Especially processes of informalisation (e.g., talks about discrimination) as well as formalisation (equality policy) have empowered social climbers to ascend towards top positions (women, homosexuals, PoC, etc.). But what does it mean that in the last 15 years we have been faced with a turn from (gender) equality towards (intersectional) diversity politics with new players and ambivalences?

Bearing the figurational approach in mind, nowadays we can observe several battles about sexism, discrimination and diversity at first sight as the typical fights for recognition between formerly outsiders and established groups. But behind these ascriptive elements and debates on deconstruction and othering, it is worth doing research on a socio-and psychogenetic order of inequality which constantly is evoking feelings and social fears of gaining or losing prestige. We are faced with an ambivalent transformation of inequality because diverse groups are closing ranks with ambitious aims. Informalisation as well as formalisation processes are part of this transformation on the macro-, meso- and microlevels. In fact, there are structural niches in organisations that enable change and innovation (Ernst, 2010a) if they are used reflexively. This process-oriented reading helps to identify power dynamics and micropolitical uncertainty zones in their interaction, which points beyond a purposive understanding of organisations and micropolitics.

The following working hypotheses and structures direct this chapter: Although gender equality policies pursued since the late 1980s have

increased the visibility of women in the horizontal career growth and in top management positions as well as in the human resources management, this intended change has not always been associated with a transformation of the overall organisational culture. Therefore, micropolitical structures and inherent dynamics must be considered as an ambivalent effect on the subjective perceptions of the acting persons, depending on the type of organization and gender culture (Ernst, 2013; Busch-Heizmann et al., 2018). Moreover, the identity- and body-political discourse changes that have now been initiated provide evidence that the organisations are not equally interested in reducing inequalities. For this reason, in the following I first want to focus on some basic theoretical thoughts before illustrating the transformation of traditional as well as new forms of ‘gender trouble’ (Butler, 1990) in administrative and organisational conduct by using selected own case studies on gender, diversity and discrimination, as well as secondary studies.

2 THEORIZING LEADERSHIP AND GENDER IN MANAGEMENT

Basically, the process-oriented organisation theory (Ernst, 2010a; Connolly & Dolan, 2017; Stacey, 2005) can not only be related to the debate whether “informalisation ‘is’ or ‘expresses’ democratization” (Wouters & Mennell, 2015), but also to processes of ‘controlled liberalisation or regulated deregulation’ (Wouters, 2014). It is usually supposed that equality between social groups would evolve almost automatically from functional democratisation. Whereas (new) social movements can be analysed by the informalisation theory, elaborated since the 1990s (Wouters, 2007), the theory on “The Established and the Outsiders” (Elias & Scotson, 2008 [1965]) helps to understand the socio-dynamics of stigmatisation and the drag-effects of equality (Ernst et al., 2017). Interrelating processes of informalisation as well as those of formalisation, the forward and backward movements and the paradigmatic changes of the last 15 years with its turn from equality towards diversity politics can be understood as an increased variety of the “complex polyphony of the movement of rising and declining groups” (Elias & Scotson, 2008 [1965], p. 20). Meanwhile, there have appeared new players and specific ambivalences.

Via the diversity policy, the path of traditional gender equality meets the integration policy path of the migration policy. Whereas equal

opportunity policies make use of quotas in order to realise formal rights and opportunities of participation and representation as a basic human right, the management world mostly hesitates to use quotas and favours ‘colourful diversity’ instead. Celebrating diversity is expected to increase the company’s efficiency. In contrast, the more normative educational perspective of diversity appears as a teaching diversity and is part of a lifelong learning process which aims for ‘true’ equality and fairness with respect to each person’s individuality at school and in the whole society (Ernst, 2013).

This paradigmatic change in the discourses about equality, equity and difference is shown in Fig. 8.1.

Irrespective of these institutional changes, the socio- and psychogenetic aspects of this complex are still predominantly invisible. With, for example, new global social movements like #MeToo or #BlackLivesMatter we observe an increased discrimination awareness and high aspiration expectations as well as a sensitivity towards discrimination. However, it also depends on the definitions whether we perceive a discrimination or diversity problem: whereas “discrimination means that economic, political and legal disadvantages are not considered as an abolishment of the principle of equality of all individuals but as an acceptable result of group diversity” (Hormel & Scherr, 2016, p. 299ff.), being different comes along with unequal treatment which is considered as legitimate. Moreover, the studies do not only prove a “discrepancy between the right to participate and belong (...) and the experienced reality” (El-Mafaalani, 2018, p. 181) which can also be understood as a typical gratification crisis of newcomers (Treibel, 2016). Even more, social climbers experience a “permanent mismatch of habitus and social context which can lead to disorientation, retreat or, on the contrary, even to a creative learning process and

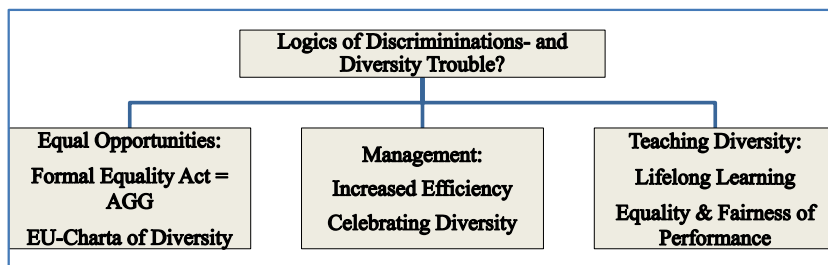


Fig. 8.1 Own depiction by Stefanie Ernst

habitus-transformation” (El-Mafaalani, 2018, p. 4). Therefore, in contrast to former generations, the increased sensitivity relates to the notion, whether “unequal treatment happens although [or because, S.E.] there are legitimate claims for equality” (El-Mafaalani et al., 2017, p. 179). Concerning gender discrimination in Germany during socio-historical long-term approaches of “functional democratisation” (Elias, 2012 [1970]), women from the bourgeoisie, middle class, and working class successfully have achieved, against resistance, social participation and equal opportunities in education, politics, and the economy: first partially in the 1920s and then especially since the 1960s (von Hodenberg, 2018; Ernst, 2022).

Although all women benefited from the formal increase in power, they profited from it differently in diverse social milieus and strata. In socio- and psychogenetic terms, this was accompanied by a socio-political loosening of formerly strict standards of behaviour between the sexes and social groups, which Wouters (2007) described as informalisation. However, this loosening did not result in the ‘decline of the Occident’ feared by conservative cultural pessimists, nor did it lead to a decline in morals and values, but in contrast, to an ambivalent, “controlled decontrolling of controls”, which took a long time. However, traditional gender concepts counteract this trend and lag behind milieu-specific egalitarian gender ideals. These undirected asynchronies of social change involve structural uncertainties and frequent experimentations in Western gender orders (Ernst, 2022). An increase in gender equality is also reflected in a change of the legal practice, which has helped to formalise social conventions, that have become more informal, and to provide disadvantaged groups with appropriate measures that should not be underestimated. However, it is precisely the effective benefit of company equality and anti-discrimination laws that has been discussed for some years (Ernst, 2021). The occupation of top positions is constantly the focus of attention, because in Germany, for example, they are still up to 90% male (and in many cases ‘white’). Even almost 40 years after the first institutional implementation of gender equality policies, little has changed at the top level.

Anyway, women tend to remain on the second management level. This gender leadership gap is particularly eye-catching in companies with more than 500 employees, whereas smaller companies, public administrations and insurance companies show a comparatively greater permeability and, in some cases, play a pioneering role (Kohaut & Möller, 2022). Even though structural and informal barriers (glass ceilings and glass handles)

are influencing factors, the continued focus on diversity and identity politics also threatens to undermine gender equity. In fact, this braking at the top refers to the informal and hidden practice in the culture of profit-oriented employment organizations. This long-standing unresolved question reappears in a varied form (Ernst, 2013). And, in the context of a medium social change, we can ask for example whether the occurrence of talks about discrimination expresses an unplanned, and moreover misguided, informalisation process with unintended results. Especially as mainly heterosexual, ‘old white men’ have benefitted in the hegemonic masculine societies of the West, for example during the era of sexual liberalization (Connell, 1995; von Hodenberg, 2018; Ernst, 2022).

After the era of the permanent thematization of gender, we currently observe a paradigm shift towards diversity policy, as a result of the question which tried and tested instruments of equality are even considered as failed (Kara & Merx, 2016). As I mentioned almost years ago (Ernst, 2016), in the last decades equality has gone beyond the “postulate of equal treatment as the avoidance of direct and indirect discrimination of people in all areas of life” (Klammer, 2018, p. 2), the attention has been directed at a momentous decoupling of the semantics of equality, difference, and justice. Instead of establishing a universal “authority of justice” (Riegraf, 2006, p. 330) that would be enabled to represent the diverse groups, the state should primarily guarantee the individual equality of opportunity. Concerning diversity policies, this means that not equality, but difference and diversity are emphasised. Naively or aggressively, the opponents of corporate quota systems presume an automatism in order to refuse legal obligations, key figures and target formulations for the equality of the sexes, especially in the private sector. In fact, the rest of their core business is characterised by professional management and controlling practices, but equality quotas are often rejected. Classical gender equality policies seem even more outdated and are under fire from an unexpected side. For a long time, the critics have complained that they violate the performance principle and that gender equality measures should be revised in order to determine “whether and to what extent they are suitable for responding to these complex interrelations” (Laufenberg et al., 2018, p. 9).

Moreover, international comparative studies on the achievements of women show that voluntary or mandatory equality quotas have different effects, depending on the policy regime and gender culture (Wilde, 2010; Walby, 2009). Even though concerns about image loss in Scandinavian countries may have a symbolic power that should not be underestimated

and may result in producing isomorphic imitation effects in organizations. Therefore, monitoring, sanctions and regulations remain important in order to counteract the evasive strategies of the companies against female majorities which have been observed. All the more, equality concepts should be “normatively coherent and consistent” (Bothfeld & Rouault, 2015, p. 26). Thus, *formalisation* in the sense of codifying organisational cultural and structural norms, rules and routines remains ambivalent, because, on the one hand, it can have equalizing effects insofar as it overcomes exclusionary practices. Otherwise, it can also have counter-intuitive effects “when it functions as a legitimizing façade behind which arbitrary or stereotypical patterns are perpetuating” (Busch-Heizmann et al., 2018, p. 58). Nevertheless, it seems indispensable when it comes to effectively implementing equality interests into conservative organizational cultures (Ernst, 2021).

3 IN THE FIGURATIONAL UNDERGROUND OF GENDERED ORGANIZATIONS

Embedding this analysis in a broader process-sociological perspective of power, interdependencies and the long-term processes of society helps to understand today's problems in a more realistic way (Baur & Ernst, 2011). Depending on the significance that the individual has for the other in a figuration or a network of interdependencies, their position of power can vary. A superior manager, for example, has a higher hierarchical position of power for his subordinate employees than the individual employee has for the superior. In a matrix or team-based organizational structure, the importance of each individual member of the organization will increase because the mutual interdependence is higher. The controllability and accountability as a basic problem of organization is thus already inherent in the ambivalence and reciprocity of interpersonal relationships. As a concept of interdependence, power is thus anti-static, dynamic and transitive between individuals and groups. The sources of power are neither solely economic nor solely individual-charismatic. Rather, they are polymorphous, fed both emotionally as well as socially and economically. The relationship between control and autonomy is specifically shifting because of the civilizational change from external control to more self-control and a reduction in hierarchy. With the transformation from feudal to bourgeois industrial society the ‘professional citizen’ was increasingly determined by the necessities of a profession which demanded regulated work and a high

degree of routinization of affects constituting the centre of his or her social constraints (Elias, 2006, pp. 70–75). These emerging work patterns continue to shape work organizations today and imply a high degree of affect control (Ernst, 2010a, pp. 47–51; Ernst, 2010b). Moreover, against this background organizations, with its triad of autonomy, trust and control are constantly intertwined.

Last not least, in a process-oriented sociology, the rational and emotional structure of organizations with its affect dynamics is therefore of particular interest. If organisations are viewed as a network of interdependent groups (management, middle management, base, target groups) shaped by power, which work, cooperate and compete differently on the vertical and horizontal levels of an organisation (routine, expert and specialist work), a dialectic of defence can also be observed. These figural and organisational aspects must be reflected if, for example, successful development and innovation processes such as sustainability, quality assurance, change and diversity management or equality policy are to be designed. Because, often, these measures cause affect and resentment, as well as support. This has to do with typical patterns between ascending groups of social climbers who (in the perspective of the established ones) ‘dare’ to attack their privileges (Ernst, 2013). In this context the debate on *gendered organisations* is relevant too: contrary to the assumption that organisations are structured in a gender-neutral way, research on gendered organisations (Acker, 1990) points out that socio-structural characteristics influence the organisational culture and the distribution of power. The extent to which organisations can reify or overcome inequality is one perspective. It also asks whether and to what extent gender equality measures can make organisations more diverse and thus better represent women or marginalised groups. The problem of reproduction thus stands alongside the classic problem of transforming working capacity into a manifest work performance. Historical stereotypes are generated right down to the binary coded areas of life and work and shape the evaluation of performance in organisations (Ernst, 2022). Labour market segregation and hierarchisation also form the institutional framing of the everyday *doing gender* of organisations reifying inequality. But organisations also have structural gaps, and this is where equality measures come in to push the issue via functional network chains.

Accordingly, even before the minority status of women at the top level is finally overcome, and even though the guiding principle of gender mainstreaming is not yet “universally applied” in German administrations

(Klammer, 2018, p. 4), further fractions are emerging inside the underground of the current gender equality and anti-discrimination debates, which was almost to be expected (Ernst, 2016). Social climbers and outsiders who have been struggling for central resources of power and recognition are no longer patiently waiting for being allowed to participate. Committed diversity activists are now expected to empower an effective change more quickly for increasingly diverse groups. The notion that individuals must ‘integrate’ themselves into the society is not only outdated, but also simply no longer fits into more diverse, individualised communities. It is accused of continuing a “deficit and minority approach” (Kara & Merx, 2016, p. 353). Diversity, participation and cohesion must be strengthened in order to enhance diversity as a location factor for international workers. At the same time, however, the focus is on administrative modernisation and its instruments of control, planning and performance measurements, which have already provided the classic equality policy. Whether and to what extent diversity can replace previous integration and equality policies, by means of anti-discrimination policies, depends, among other things, on inherent logics and conflicts of goals in organisational practices, which result against the often-overlooked background of many people, in an actionist anti-discrimination campaign (Ernst, 2021). For example, it becomes problematic when proven gender equality workers and sympathizers, as carriers of the ‘system’, are sweepingly and rigorously suspected of ‘racism’ or ‘transphobism’ or are faced with accusations of misconduct and sometimes lose their jobs comparatively quickly (Schreyögg, 2015; Schrandner et al., 2019).

First, diversity focuses on dealing with diversity in an appreciative manner, reducing discrimination and promoting equal opportunities. Translated into diversity management, the aim is to increase productive cooperation and job satisfaction and to include all organisational members (Ernst, 2013). However, management concepts are also subject to rationalisation illusions and inherent dynamics per se, so that organisational differentiation varies, depending on the field of application. The point is that, in the strategical scheme of things, difference is often used in the sense of a functionalist-positivist understanding (Bührmann, 2021), because it corresponds to the inherent logic of organisations. At the same time, inclusion is realised by means of the essentialisation and othering of the ‘outsider’ (Elias & Scotson, 2008 [1965]). From the critics’ point of view, the diversity issue is systemically affirmed via indicators and scores and therefore ignores organisational change (Laufenberg et al., 2018). Moreover, if the affected persons are not allowed to be considered as weak and in need of

protection in order to build a “diversity-appropriate and discrimination-free administrative culture” (ADS, 2017, pp. 8, 44, 45), this would provoke a pre-programmed systemic overload or dilemma. In addition, the social dynamics of everyday distinctions, which do not necessarily involve hierarchies, are underestimated in this politicisation of management. In fact, the results our recent research project have shown that it is more likely to argue for discrimination-sensitive rather than for discrimination-free organisational cultures (Ernst, 2013, p. 2021). Thus, are the aporias of the current diversity and inequality debate more related to conflicts of recognition than to redistribution? Between fundamental criticism and scepticism of corporate diversity management, on the one hand, and innovative, reflexive diversity research, on the other hand, there are currently still pervasive many split-offs in the debate on equality and difference:

In this sense, therefore, there can be no timeless and universally valid understanding of diversity at all, since this very understanding is always (re)produced only in actu and thereby creates its object area itself, so to speak. (Wallner, 2020, p. 43)

Diversity as a construction, and, at the same time as a product of power relations, is embedded in social contexts with their own dynamics and routines and can thus hardly escape the risk of essentialising identities. In terms of personnel and administrative policy, this means that anti-discrimination and equal opportunity commissioners are apparently to mutate *en passant* into diversity commissioners and feel-good managers, who, in accordance with the (expanding) diversity dimensions, have to pursue several issues: Ensuring the representation through procedures that are not too old-fashioned, and enabling participation and job satisfaction. A look at our qualitative expert interviews of the recently completed EU project SPRYNG (2017–2020) (Ernst, 2021) supports this theory, as, for example, a former head of a municipal anti-discrimination agency reflects:

So, it's the most subordinated rubric that you can think of, actually. And there was a very active phase, starting with, say, the mid-1990s, when in those days for the first time a Red-Green coalition was formed in the Federal Government, and after eight to ten years the hype was over, [...] because: the organizational environment has changed, or rather also has turned somewhat inward. (AD_3: 13)¹

¹The abbreviations are used to anonymise the interviewees. Quotes were translated by the author.

In addition, these complex and emotionally charged movement discourses are frequently attacked across the board by a masculinist anti-genderists movement (Wilde, 2021), which uses gender-reflexive language, for example, as a “gender-political initiative”, in order to oppose a pretended preference for women and ‘minorities’ in all areas of society and to agitate the public opinion (Hark & Villa, 2016; Beck et al., 2021; see Dunning et al. in this book). In contrast to the gender income gap, which is attributed to purely private preferences and gender-specific life plans, the activists believe that there is a gender empathy gap at the expense of supposedly ‘neglected’ men, because:

The uniliteral promotion of women was accompanied by the devaluation of men [...]. The consequences of this ideological feminism have so far remained predominantly a taboo subject in the public sphere. (Beck et al., 2021, p. 13)

Therefore, we need further empirical studies and evaluations of gender equality projects in public organisations and in the private sector instead of an early light-hearted swansong. We don’t have to reinvent the wheel, because whether read as an upsurge from below or as a protection of traditional privileges, the sometimes, denounced irreconcilable gaps in justice point to typical structural similarities of social power and the recognition struggles between different groups, the varieties of which have become visibly, more subtle, and complex (Ernst, 2022).

4 EXEMPLAR CASE STUDIES OF INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION

Since at least the accusations of misconduct at the ETH Zurich and the German Max Planck Society (Schrandner et al., 2019, p. 11; Hesselmann, 2020), among others, or at big companies in the business world (Schreyögg, 2015) or in the arena of cultural policy, a variety of institutional defensive reactions and sanctions have become visible. More popular cases of heavy ‘shitstorms’ and attacks can be referred to the famous author J.K. Rowling and the feminist author Suzanne Moore, who has been writing for the British journal *Guardian* for years (Moore, 2020; Sales & Carr, 2022). These persons, often social climbers themselves, are confronted with the growing upward social mobility of excluded groups (Ernst, 2021) and make the conflicts on equality policy, which already

have become cumbersome, even more complex. Many phenomena have been described yet, such as recognition and attribution of reputation as a central power resource in the scientific field or specific types of femininity (Ernst, 2003) which can change the hegemonic organisational culture with a quantum of habitual fit. Precisely the interactions of gender and organisational culture and resistance remain elusive and under-researched. Both micro-political power relations and often overloaded expectations (also from inside their own social ranks) have made the polyvalent game of parity and participation even more multidimensional. This is particularly visible in the dilemma that women, who deal offensively with or make use of equality policy concerns, are subject to an exaggerated performance norm and their individual failures are even more individualised, “since they cannot apparently be blamed on a lack of equality policy” (Busch-Heizmann et al., 2018, p. 59).

It then becomes clear that their, offensive or defensive, cautious action also depends on the openness or closedness as well as the formal or informal handling of operational conflicts and interest differences (Busch-Heizmann et al., 2018; Ernst, 2021). According to our studies, in the administrative practice this can lead to a situation where further diversity topics, such as sexual orientation, identity, origin and religion, not only have to be approached cautiously, as the anti-discrimination commissioner states:

Now you have to imagine, in an administration, take into consideration we're talking about [the, SE] 1990s, for an administration this topic was very, very exotic, to put it carefully. And so, many people pointed their fingers at it in all places. The terms alone, yes, and 'gay' and 'lesbian'. Whereby lesbian came across as a little more innocuous than straight gay. Setting up [such] a round table or making the administration to deal with the issue, was quite a hurdle. (AD_3: 27)

In fact, an interviewed coordinator of an integration centre observed a general caution in dealing with the General Equal Treatment Act in administrative and economic structures:

So, what I notice is, for example, that the AGG [...] was originally intended to counteract this form of discrimination and that it somehow [...] started out a tiger and slowly ended up a bedside rug. And that there were quite other expectations [...]. That one can counteract these various forms of discrimination, namely that it would be able to counteract these various

forms of discrimination. And what actually is happening is that everyone is doing their selection interviews even more subtly and suggestively, so to speak. And also, more structured, less person-oriented, just so as not to be accusable, or not to run the risk that anyone could feel disadvantaged. (KI_2: 143)

This organisational increase in complexity is also associated with weariness when, for example, an employee of the youth welfare office, who has been working in the administration for 20 years, misunderstands equality policy measures. It is true that more women have been promoted in the recent years:

But I don't think we should condition it so much on gender and say that a woman is preferred if she has the same qualifications. The man says: 'Every man, why? If we are the same in terms of qualifications, there must be something different or they must differentiate in another way and not condition it on gender'. From my point of view, this is discrimination against men, however, the Equal Opportunities Commissioner certainly would be of another opinion, but from my point of view that is the way it is. If you have the same qualifications, you have to add other characteristics and not gender. That's not only the case in the city of XY, but in general, many companies do it that way. It's okay to signal a certain openness in this way. But if it leads to discrimination against individual men, I don't think that's okay either. That's overshooting the mark a bit. But basically, it is right to focus on that, to say, 'We want women to apply for this position' and so on. (JR_3: 65)

As illustrated in this typical quote, the struggles for recognition and resources usually are not without conflict. In the face of these complex logics and dynamics in the administration of gender equality issues, there is consequently a need for further research:

... especially with regard to the interdependencies of categories of difference, in order to understand the actual realisation opportunities of women and men of different social groups, also in their interrelatedness, and to be able to tailor evidence-based political action to the actual problematic situations accordingly. (Klammer, 2018, p. 8)

Further findings have shown that diverse groups are also played off against each other; there is a competition between different identity constructs which may result in the emergence of new types of conflicts of

objectives (freedom of religion vs. the right to sexual self-determination and protection of privacy). Confronted with the contradiction that actually they are formally entitled to the rights of participation and belonging, the expectations of equality are thus regularly frustrated in the practice of organisations. At the same time, the progress in equality and tolerance is juxtaposed with persistent contradictions that point to institutional discrimination, for example, regarding the origin. Although understanding and tolerance have grown and new rights have been institutionalised, many of our respondents have stated that there are “backslashes” (PD_2: 184; BF_1: 73) as well as an increased social polarisation (PM_1: 242). An intensified tolerance of group hostility, such as anti-Semitism at school or “social envy”, which has especially “increased since the Russian and Bosnian immigration to Germany in the 1990s” (JR_2: 268), are among the ambivalent phenomena here. This point and the perception that structurally conservative organisations do not come up to the expectations of socio-political dynamics, in particular due to the disparity of social change, points all the more to organisational dynamics of their own as well as to typical, partly permanent consolidations of work in change processes (Ernst et al., 2017; Ernst, 2021).

Management research initially appears neutral in its rationalist understanding of organisation and relies on the logic of procedures that enable organisations to provide a purpose-oriented, coordinated achievement of goals, based on the division of labour, in a formally structured process organisation that can operate far from individual arbitrariness. But nevertheless, this rationality is limited and not free from informal practices. It becomes clear that a functional identification with the organisation is necessary for balancing new (diversity-sensitive) social and organisational values in administrative and working activities. Rather, the ‘other’ is often still seen as an irritation in the face of the blindly running lubricant of corporate identity.

Top female managers are often suspected of having reached their position not because of their professional aptitude, but because they were elected or placed at the top of the organisation for legal or image reasons. As ‘tokens’ (Kanter, 1977), they are therefore from the outset under observation and often in charge of quite unpopular tasks that come along with innovation management, reorganisation and restructuring measures and may implicate staff reductions as well (Schreyögg, 2015). Thus, the important alliance, formed by works and staff councils, as well as by (if available) gender equality representatives as central change agents, is at

risk (Busch-Heizmann et al., 2018, p. 58). In this respect, as it is often the case with marginalised employees, they are under the multiple pressure of expectations, proof and overperform. According to studies on women in supervisory boards, this matter of fact not only puts them at the risk of failure, but also that of wearing out their labour. Not seldom, unsuccessful men, meanwhile, move on to the next challenge almost without harm, while women tend to withdraw from business (Schreyögg, 2015) and may be subject to “emotional alienation” due to persistent conflicts and dissonances (Rastetter & Jüngling, 2018, p. 89). In this context, our own company studies in the public sector (Ernst, 2013) underline as well that even a good ten years after the introduction of teamwork and middle management levels in a classic line organisation, new executives have only moderately followed and the potential for conflict has increased. For example, a subordinate from the operational level, refuses to make communicative contributions in team meetings because he wants to show his female bosses “who wears the pants” (Ernst, 2013).

In addition to this staffing as mobbing from below, which has received little attention in research to date, micro-political disruptive manoeuvres are also associated with it, which can affect women at the middle management as well as at the strategic management level. Based on her studies, Macha (2014) identifies a high pressure to act at innovation-oriented small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), if the organisational-cultural change towards a gender- and diversity-appropriate personnel strategy is to be convincingly implemented. Especially if the company management only supports this organisational development, a real change in the company culture will be more difficult:

The greatest resistance comes [...] mostly from the middle management level of men who vehemently resist the new [...] and practice aggressive[s] behaviour towards (female) project leaders up to attacks ‘on the bosses’ who live the new, and also want to make it bind. (Macha, 2014, p. 52)

Exposed top female managers are often trapped in the (long-term) social constructed “dilemma between professionalism and femininity” (Rastetter & Jüngling, 2018, p. 31; Ernst, 2003). They must struggle for independence and sovereignty, on the one hand, and acceptance and sympathy, on the other. Micro-disparagement, for example in sexist remarks, which ignore female contributions and corporatist ingroup rules, is part of the arsenal of organisational power techniques and resources that

ambitious women should reflect on. This, sometimes toxic, work climate is also related to processes of creating group cohesions, which come about by means of similarity and company affiliations (social age) (Ernst, 2003). Praise and blame gossip are used for symbolically appreciating one's own group members, while newcomers or 'others' are considered as a minority and, in the case of 'deviant behaviour', even framed as representatives of the outsider group par excellence. They are labelled with stereotypes that have become more subtle (Elias & Scotson, 2008; Ernst, 2003; Rastetter & Jüngling, 2018, p. 29 ff.). Moreover, these practices are embedded in a de-limiting operational and presence culture of top management (esp. before the pandemic). The permanent availability with an average 60-hour week not only makes a private life (possibly even with caring obligations) outside the company almost unthinkable, but it is celebrated by means of a ritualised exclusivity at the price of the "hyper-inclusivity" (Schreyögg, 2015, p. 104) of the individual. Breaking down these power imbalances across organisational hierarchies depends on positions and power relations in the organisational structure with its professional and micropolitical interconnections to which newcomers still must get used to. But even then, as Dahl's (2021) study on bystander experiences in men's domains shows, it takes some effort to courageously counter micropolitical hostility and discrimination in the attacked person's or an observer's role:

While an incident of discrimination with perpetrators at a similar or lower status level is perceived as unpleasant, it can and will be solved with little effort through a short intervention, discrimination situations with perpetrators of a higher status cause uncertainty, uncomfortable feelings and perplexity regarding an appropriate and effective intervention. (Dahl, 2021, p. 190)

A strategic analysis of actors and organisations thus also includes the awareness that outsiders must establish networks and alliances and observe dress codes, rituals and implicit performance rules in order to control the constant overlapping of their professional role by the gender role (Rastetter & Jüngling, 2018, p. 53ff.). This external constraint of constant self-control also requires strength to act neither too rationally nor too emotionally, but gender- and situation-flexibly. Particularly in informal, casual organisational cultures with ostensibly flat hierarchies, we are expecting an open, relaxed approach, which often leads to misunderstandings (Rastetter & Jüngling, 2018, pp. 39, 79ff.).

5 CONCLUSION

Gender relations have moved away from the paternalistic behavioural ideal of harmonic difference (Ernst, 2003, p. 297). Having arrived at the model of “inharmonious equality” (Liston, 2005, p. 625, see also Ernst, 2003), however, they have become permanently negotiated relationships in the private as well as in the professional life. Compared to the turn of the millennium and the time before, we have made considerable progress, which is reflected in the significant representation of women, especially in middle management positions, which are steppingstones to top positions, particularly in the widespread teamwork. The organisational and process-sociological-centred approach applied here should have made clear the relevance of social impulses of formalisation and informalisation, with which the more complex struggles for the recognition and participation of various groups, that have become more diverse, can be understood from a detached perspective. Effective cultures of equality, exceeding pretended mission statements, require genuine equality structures with defined systems of values and meaning which sustainably improve equal opportunities (Busch-Heizmann et al., 2018, p. 69). Whether and how this can be achieved remains to be explored in further organisational, gender and diversity research. A systematic diversity- and gender-conform transformation of organisations can make use of both the formal organisation and micropolitically relevant majorities as well as reflexively appropriate structural dynamics of unknowingness and indeterminacy. Thereby, it may be possible, beyond the agitated, partly depoliticising identity debates, to distinguish between conflicts of goals, sham debates and sideshows from a committed, distanced point of view, and to better localise their beneficiaries.

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Gender Dynamics in Academia: A Figurational Exploration of Gendered Established–Outsider Relations in Physics

Valerie Dahl

1 INTRODUCTION

When the Nobel Prize for Physics was awarded to Donna Strickland in 2018 and Andrea Ghez in 2020, respectively, female physicists were the talk of the town. Besides well-deserved recognition and numerous congratulations from their academic peers and the public, their win sparked—once again—a debate about why only four female physicists have ever received the award in the history of one of the most prestigious science prizes and whether physics has a problem in terms of gender equality.

Women striving for equal participation in physics and other natural sciences do not struggle due to a lack of effort: In Germany for example, the annual “Girl’s Day” initiative has been taking place since 2001; a day during which especially schoolgirls get a taste of industrial and technical

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professions and are thus encouraged to pursue a career in these otherwise male-dominated professional fields. And while the proportion of female students taking up physics studies at German universities is steadily increasing, the proportion of female professors, PIs and (post)doctoral researchers lags far behind their male colleagues.¹ Especially after obtaining a PhD, many female physicists leave the German science system and switch to non-university research or to positions in industry. Should they set foot in academia, many female physicists face isolation at work: Overall, women in physics occupy fewer official positions, are less likely to be decision-makers and more likely to fight against the invisibility of their research—despite the fact that science, and especially STEM² fields, are based on an inherent claim of objectivity, neutrality and meritocracy, which should—in theory—level out gender differences between researchers (Powell and Arora-Jonsson 2022). Even when successfully entering and remaining in the field of professional physics, women still regularly face discrimination and harassment (Barthelemy et al. 2016), which can also lead to dropping out of scientific careers (Aycock et al. 2019).

How has this state of exclusion of women from physics come to pass and persisted despite gender equality policies and similar measures in German academia? In this chapter, I would like to add a figurational perspective to the current state of research on women in academia and explore the hypothesis that men and women in physics are both parts of an established-outsider figuration, which is maintained through power maintenance mechanisms such as group cohesion or praise and blame gossip. Next, I shall extend the approach to this hypothesis after the introduction. Afterwards, I will first give an overview of the exclusion of women from science and physics, then relate praise and blame gossip mechanisms to discrimination against female physicists, and finally present results from my own research that, in addition to confirming my thesis, also show a change in the gender figuration in physics.

¹ At German universities, only 18.97% of all academic employees in physics are female; among the professors, the share is even lower (13.68%). The group of research fellows and lecturers also has a share of only 19.69% female employees (German Federal Office of Statistics, 2022).

² Abbreviation for “Science, Tech, Engineering and Mathematics”.

2 CHANGING (GENDERED) POWER RELATIONS AND INTERDEPENDENCIES IN ACADEMIA

Modern universities no longer exclusively consist of the Humboldtian unity of research and teaching, but form increasingly complex interdependencies with society, economy and politics. These non-university actors also have an immense influence on the processes and operations within a university. The increasing corporatization of universities and the resulting demanded marketability of research and teaching contribute to increasing competitive pressures between, but also within, organizations. Therefore, it is worthwhile to take an organizational sociological look at universities in order to shed more light on precisely this tension between inter- and intra-organizational conflicts. In what follows, I will use Baur et al.'s (2016) model of science as a “multi-level phenomenon” to illustrate that, in addition to the (seemingly) everyday tensions in academia, gendered conflicts also occur. This manifests itself both at the *macro level* of science in the form of professional cultural differences between men and women, as well as at the *meso level* in the acquisition of funds and the gender-specific advancement of careers, and at the *micro level* in the form of gender-specific discrimination against women.

2.1 *Organizational Perspectives on Science as a Field of Conflict*

Baur et al. (2016) consider science a so-called multi-level phenomenon, wherein the interdependencies of the actors and institutions of science become clearly visible on the macro, meso and micro level of science. On the *macro level*, science is seen in its entirety and is considered especially in regard to the characteristics of science. According to Elias (1982), however, there is no longer one single, universal (concept of) science. Instead, there has been a “scientific specialism” (Elias 1982, p. 4) of disciplines into more and more sub-disciplines, each with their own, almost man-made, (disciplinary) culture:

Scholarly men have then abstracted [...] a number of general rules of speech and thought, which are connected with the functions of speech and thought for communication and orientation, and have presented them in the form of general, largely tautological regularities. (Elias 2009a, p. 194)

This relationship between the universities and their environment is changing lastingly with the adoption of principles from New Public Management and neo-institutionalism into administrative, teaching and researching structures of universities (Huber 2012; Vollmer 2016). Here, the *meso level* of science comes into effect, as an organizational sociological typification of science (Baur et al. 2016).

For the sociological mapping of universities, Mintzberg's organizational typology provides an appropriate basis. Mintzberg typologizes universities as "professional bureaucracies". Characteristic for this type of organization—and particularly relevant with regard to the professional cultural influences described above—is the formation of standards by a "professional community". Furthermore, the university as a "professional bureaucracy" is characterized by its highly professionalized employees in the operational core and their high degree of autonomy with regard to their work activities, but also the shared administrative responsibilities (Engels 2004).

Especially in administration, but also increasingly in research and teaching, there is a growing favoritism of economically relevant projects and results, due to the course of the corporatization of the university (Maasen and Weingart 2006; Huber 2012). Accordingly, academia is changing from the Humboldtian ideal of the unity of research and teaching towards becoming a "service organ" (Baumeler 2009, p. 69), where the industrial-political relevance of the output becomes more and more central and valuable. This can be seen in the "Triple Helix Model", which identifies the entrepreneurial university as a new type of organization. The main characteristic of this type is the partial elimination of the mediation between producers and consumers of knowledge; instead, universities now become producers of goods and services themselves. Consequently, there is a greater commercialization of knowledge and research, which places the latter in particular under a strong compulsion to demonstrate its usefulness (Baumeler 2009).

Elias (1982) also noted a shift in interdependencies within academia due to the growing influence of non-university actors and financing of research and teaching. For him, this is also accompanied by a growing competitive relationship between the actors within the university:

The power tensions and conflicts, potential and actual, which are generated by balance problems of this kind, form part of a wider set of standing ten-

sions and conflicts which have their roots in the social situation of scientific establishments and in the figuration of interdependencies within which they have their place. (Elias 1982, p. 4)

Thus, the processes on the macro and meso levels also entail changes on the *micro level* of science. Here, the actual everyday work of researchers and teachers is taken into account, as well as the course of a research process (Baur et al. 2016). In addition to the day-to-day tasks of research and teaching, interpersonal relations also have a major impact on the work actions of academic employees. The working thesis of this chapter, as presented in the introduction, is that gender relations in academia, especially in physics, are characterized by a balance of power tilted in favor of men. The extent to which this relation can be seen under the premise of an established–outsider figuration will be explored in Sect. 2.1.

2.2 *Gendered Established–Outsider Dynamics*

Recently, the topos “gendered discrimination” is often associated with the #MeToo debate. Delmotte (2019, also see Delmotte in this volume) looks at the emergence of this movement and the origins of sexual harassment and gender discrimination from a process sociological perspective and follows the discourse along Elias’ main work “On the Process of Civilisation”. While Elias’ perspective on gender relations plays only a subordinate role in these books, his publications also include texts that examine gender relations in particular, that is, his essay “The Changing Balances of Power between the Sexes” (2009b). However, other works have also been used to look at gender relations from a figural point of view. In particular, the established–outsider figuration (Elias and Scotson 2008) often serves as a basis for illustrating processes of social exclusion and power balances between the genders.

In this figuration, there is an established and an outsider group (connected via a double bind) of which the established group is the party with the most power in the figuration. This is due to the stronger cohesion of the members of the established group, which in the original study is attributed to their higher social age (determined by length of residence). The members of the established group secure this superiority of power through two mechanisms for maintaining power; praise gossip serves for (self-) exaltation, while blame gossip serves to devalue the outsiders (Elias and Scotson 2008).

There is a growing popularity of the established–outsider figuration amongst gender researchers. Ernst (2003, also Ernst in this volume) applies the established–outsider figuration to German women in leadership positions and shows that women in leadership positions are still confronted with blame gossip; on the one hand, they are deemed as not qualified enough for leadership positions, on the other hand, women in leadership positions (and women in working life in general) supposedly neglect the mother role traditionally assigned to them (Ernst 2003, p. 296). At present, this imbalance seems not to have been resolved, although it is much easier for women to get into a leadership position nowadays. Despite these “small victories”, women nevertheless remain in an outsider position (Ernst 2003, p. 297). Liston (2005) applies established–outsider relations to women in male-dominated fields of professional sport in Ireland, showing how the entry of female athletes (as outsiders) into a male-dominated domain (read: a domain of the established) can be characterized as an “inharmonious equality” between the genders (Liston 2005, p. 81).³ Liston then relates the conflicts and tensions arising with the entry of women in male-dominated fields of sports to “the importance of these sports to masculine habituses” (ibid., p. 69) and women’s difficulties to identify with the established habitus. What approaches have in common is that they identify a change in their respective gender-related figurations. Bucholtz (2011, p. 431) sees this as a “chance to counteract” for women to step out of their weaker position of power. This is done by means of three coping strategies with which women can gain power:

On the institutional level women tend to monopolize certain areas of social life and exclude men from them [...] Symbolic coping strategy of women consists in changing the image of a woman in the culture [...] the actions taken on the proxemic level are as a rule a consequence of the institutional and symbolic developments; they are not, strictly speaking strategies in their own right, but rather tactic measures. (Bucholtz 2011, p. 431f.)

³ Both Ernst (2003) and Liston (2005) reiterate the concept of “harmonious inequality” (van Stolk & Wouters, 1987) in their takes. With the term, van Stolk and Wouters describe the relationship of the genders during a “phase of consolidation and resignation”; according to them, this ideal is formed through a high dependency of the genders on each other and only changes during a “phase of emancipation and resistance” (van Stolk & Wouters, 1987, p. 485).

The extent to which gender plays an exclusionary role in physics and therefore manifests an established–outsider dynamic between male and female physicists shall be explored in Sect. 3.

3 EXCLUSION AND DISCRIMINATION OF FEMALE PHYSICISTS

As mentioned above, the thesis of this chapter runs contrary to the general belief that, with regard to the natural sciences, one is dealing with neutral, genderless and meritocratic disciplines in which only academic ability counts. For example, Danielsson and Lundin (2014) hypothesize that with the (supposed) gender neutrality of physics, significantly more masculinities than femininities could coexist. This, they argue, is related to the idea that masculinity in physics is something “natural”, while femininity in physics is something artificial (Danielsson and Lundin 2014, p. 525). From this they conclude that the opposition between physics as a gender-neutral discipline and the woman-physicist dichotomy is not an opposition, but in Butler’s (2002) terms a symptom of the assumption that masculinity is non-performative and thus easily reconcilable with the gender neutrality of physics (ibid., p. 528). Following, I will show that the discrimination of women in science and especially in physics has a long “tradition” and is still reflected in a processual way on the macro, meso and micro level of academic physics.

3.1 *The Macro Level: Historical Perspectives on Gendered Exclusion from Academia*

Along with the advancing professionalization of science and the accompanying specialization of researchers into disciplines (Weber 2004), science also shifted to being exerted at universities rather than private households. This meant that supporting tasks were now no longer done by wives and daughters, but by hired (mostly male) professionals instead. Women were thus separated from science in terms of location at the beginning of industrialization. According to Hoffmann (2011), reproductive work or the family world was stylized as a “counter-design” to the scientific profession, especially by (educated) middle-class men. This is made possible not least by the spatial separation between work and home and the progressive gendered division of labor, which relieves the “science man” in favor of his research activities.

Nevertheless, bourgeois women found ways to access (informal) scientific activities, for example, through attending a secondary school for girls or hiring tutors, self-studying in their father's libraries or through the support of a male mentor (Hoffmann 2011, p. 120f.). The social changes around the turn of the century, mostly characterized by (a) improved economic provision for bourgeois families; (b) the progressive development of modern household technology; and (c) the more idealized self-realization through knowledge (acquisition) also of female family members, contribute their share here. Nevertheless, taking up a (scientific) profession remains "a matter for unmarried women" (Hoffmann 2011, p. 117).

Women only gained broad formal access to universities and thus also to organized science from the beginning of the twentieth century as a result of the efforts of the women's movement. In Germany, for example, women had the right to attend as guest students at the University of Berlin from 1896, and it was mainly professors' wives and daughters who made use of this right. They also repeatedly took on jobs as assistant academics before women were formally allowed to enroll at German universities from 1900 onwards (Hoffmann 2011, p. 121ff.). Therefore, "science established itself as an exclusively male sphere—not only numerically, but also symbolically" (Heintz 2003, p. 213).

3.2 *The Macro-Meso Link: Images of an Ideal (Male) Scientist*

Typically, this "male sphere" in science is characterized by (self-)elevation of male scientists: For the longest time, male scientists were said to have strong "physical and nervous powers", which is why they are able to withstand the hardships of everyday life at school and university. Moreover, male scientists were said to be free from the "irregularities of the female organism" and are the only bearers of (among other things) mental strength, intellect, logic, independence and productive capacity. In addition to physical and mental productivity and reason, the sphere of masculinity also includes creative ideas, creativity and originality—core qualities of scientists yesterday and today (Hausen 1986, p. 34f.). Historical examples show that, in some cases, laws of physics were also used as "evidence" for these statements: Scientists in the nineteenth century deduced from the laws of thermodynamics that women would not be able to fulfill their "natural" task—reproduction—or at least would be less able to do so if they "wasted" their energies on scientific work. Others thought the laws

of magnetism proved that women had a “natural” desire for pregnancy and conception (Götschel 2011, p. 73).

As inane as these arguments may be, a vicious circle is created here that persists to this day. In the course of the (academic) socialization process, women are taught skills and role concepts that “fit” the sphere of reproduction assigned to women, but are not usable in the sphere of production assigned to men (Engler 1993, p. 22). A characteristic of male-dominated science enterprises is “the greatest possible concentration of all time and energy on science production and administration” (Hausen 1986, p. 31). This demand for unrestricted loyalty presupposes a gender-specific division of labor due to the still prevailing stereotype of the male “ideal scientist”, so that the “man of science [...] is relieved as completely as possible of the necessary investments in the “trivialities” of everyday and family life” (ibid., p. 31). For women, the majority of whom still perform family care work today, this seems to be a condition for entering and remaining in science, which they are unable to fulfill or only to a limited extent (Nowotny 1986, p. 23f.).

Höttecke (2001) shows that these views already appear among school students who regard the stereotypical physicist as a male “neutral data collector” (Höttecke 2001, p. 9) who pursues an objective, value-free and neutral kind of science out of a pure interest in gaining knowledge (ibid., p. 9f.). From this expression it is already clear that in the students’ minds, people working in physics are assigned to a specific gender (ibid., p. 10). Höttecke furthermore shows that this represents a strong barrier of entry into physics for female students, especially in regard to a subsequent professional career in physics: “Female role models are hardly ever found in the natural sciences, a fact that is clearly reflected in the understanding of children/students discussed here. The fact that female identification figures and role models are largely absent in physics, and that male stereotypes dominate instead, makes it difficult for girls to identify with physics as a school subject and as a research discipline” (ibid., p. 10).

Leslie et al. (2015) show that women are particularly underrepresented in areas of the natural sciences where meritocratic factors such as “talent” or “aptitude” (or more colloquially: “genius”, or “brilliance”) are considered entry requirements. The difficult access to these disciplines for women, stems from the stereotype that women do not possess “talent” for fields like physics or chemistry, Leslie et al. continue. Other factors examined, such as subject-specific office hours or the number of doctoral students accepted per year, were not or hardly decisive for the exclusion of

women from these subjects. The study also showed that the respondents were of the opinion that men were more likely to have the required “talent” than women (Leslie et al. 2015, p. 262ff.).

3.3 *The Meso Level I: Male Dominance in Disciplinary Cultures*

Gender inequalities at universities are reproduced not only by a male ideal image of researchers, but also by a specific subject culture, to which gender differences are sometimes more pronounced and sometimes weaker, depending on the peculiarities of the subject (Seyfried and Reith 2017). Combined with the emergence of an idealized image of a male researcher, a male habitus emerges in male-dominated subjects, which presupposes the image as an entry criterion and thereby perpetuates it. Therefore, it is legitimate to speak of male-dominated subject cultures (Dahl 2021).

Universities produce specific “scientific cultures”, under which the formal and informal hierarchies, customs and practices of the “scientific community” can be subsumed. This also includes its own forms of communication, patterns of interaction between the members of the university organization, and the self-image of the male and female scientists who belong to it. For physics, as Elias recognized, the maintenance of the image of a “universal science” that “primarily seek[s] laws and appl[ies] quantitative methods” (Elias 2009a [1985], p. 194) still applies. According to Stichweh (2013), there have been three growth impulses that have made physics an established discipline at German universities: (1) The founding of the “Technische Universitäten” (technical universities) and their academization (from the 1960s onwards) has favored the establishment of physics as a discipline, as a result of which (2) there has been an internal differentiation within physics into a mathematical-theoretical and an experimental direction, which in turn, (3) has led to an increased demand for hands-on teaching and lecturer positions (Stichweh 2013). Thus, in physics taught and researched at German universities, both “discursive-intellectual” and “manual-practical milieus” (Stichweh 2013, p. 196) productively co-exist, so that until the 1980s working in academic physics did not require interaction with “extra-scientific service consumers” (Stichweh 2013, p. 118).

Beaufäys and Kraiss (2005) take Bourdieu’s concepts of *illusio* and the social field as a starting point to show that each discipline forms its own subject habitus:

The established actors of the scientific field not only have certain ideas about what good scientific work is, but also about who can be recognized as a player and who cannot. And it is precisely these two points that cannot be separated as cleanly as scientists themselves assume. (Beaufaÿs and Kraiss 2005, p. 84)

In their concept, the practice of science stands for the *illusio*; young scientists should also internalize this practice and form a habitus as scientists. This also includes cultivating the symbolic practices of the social field of science (ibid., p. 85ff.), therefore involving an almost complete subjection to the role of the scientist and his professional goals (Weber 2004). The fact that this is more difficult for women than for men due to an inter-role conflict has already been mentioned above and will be further illustrated below. Beaufaÿs and Kraiss conclude that it is certain that women are more distrustful of whether they are up to an academic career; this is particularly evident in face-to-face interactions, which often include further acts of symbolic violence. The characteristic “female” is often still considered a “disturbing variable” in the context of science (ibid., p. 89ff.).

Although women are entering the field of science (and physics) more frequently, they are still confronted (especially in classic male domains) with a power structure consisting of status and hierarchy as well as traditional gender roles, in which they often lose out to the established men.

Münst (2008) also shows that there is a connection between gender inequalities and the subject culture of physics. Particularly in male-dominated subjects such as physics and computer science, female students are often (unconsciously) excluded due to “culturally practiced patterns of interaction” (Münst 2008, p. 194). For example, female students are often (unconsciously) seen as less capable than their male peers and are treated accordingly as subordinates, for example, in practice groups or proseminars. Furthermore, Münst shows that the prevailing subject and teaching culture in physics also establishes and perpetuates the inherent meaning of status. The author illustrates this with the example of physics courses: the more important a course, the higher the status of the responsible teacher; in this way, the “association of the teaching structure with a hierarchical position” (ibid., p. 184) is already established among students in the subject-cultural habitus of physics.

3.4 *The Meso Level II: Informal Networks and Structural Barriers*

Informal networks among close and extended colleagues are gaining importance in academia (Lind and Löther 2007). Above all, informal networks offer advantages for one's own career: they bring contacts, support and opportunities for cooperation. However, this also means that networks are staffed by the people who make up the majority. For women in male-dominated fields such as physics, there are therefore a number of hurdles when it comes to integrating into formal and informal networks.

Holleran et al.'s (2011) analysis of workplace conversations shows that not only the quality but also the nature of the topics addressed can have an influence on job satisfaction and thus, in the longer term, on identification with the subject and the "sense of belonging" already mentioned above (Holleran et al. 2011, p. 66). In addition to professional content, private topics of conversation can increase networking and job satisfaction. However, women are less likely to be part of networks of this kind, which is why they run the risk of a low "sense of belonging" (ibid., p. 66). In addition, private conversations among colleagues carry the risk for women of appearing less capable and incompetent, as this does not fit the work ethos of physics (ibid., p. 69). This low level of embedding in formal and informal networks and the resulting lack of opportunities and contacts poses greater career-related problems for women than for men. According to Settles et al. (2006), this also reduces job and employer satisfaction as well as performance and productivity, especially if the organization is also perceived as sexist or tolerant of sexism (Settles et al. 2006, p. 48). Furthermore, the perception of an organization as sexist (tolerant) has a stronger impact on productivity and performance than actual, direct sexism (ibid., p. 48). It is interesting to note that no differences were found in these results between the group of female natural scientists and the group of female sociologists. This raises the question of whether women in physics, where as described above they are a "disruptive variable" and thus possibly a strong target of sexist discrimination, have developed corresponding "coping mechanisms" for dealing with gender-specific discrimination.

Lind and Löther (2007) address this question by reconstructing an ideal-typical academic career path for women and comparing it with statements by respondents and relevant statistics in order to identify barriers to

women's careers in the science system. The result was that a mixed-methods approach, first, offered greater knowledge potential than a purely quantitative analysis; second, an examination of the qualification process over time also provided greater knowledge. As a result, the authors identify decisive barriers for women or for dropping out of academic careers at two points: the transition to a doctorate and the transition to a habilitation (Lind and Löther 2007, p. 252). Possible causes for this can be seen in different confirmation behavior on the part of supervisors and teachers, but also in the higher classification of doctorates and habilitations among male colleagues. Subtle gender differences in career orientation may also play a role (*ibid.*, p. 254; Willems 2007). It is equally true for men and women in academia that efforts to obtain a doctorate and habilitation are more often abandoned in the case of a low academic status; women, however, have per se lower chances of obtaining a high-paying position in academia (*ibid.*, p. 255; Solga and Pfahl 2009).

Kahlert (2013) asks whether there are gendered differences in the promotion of men's and women's careers on the part of supervisors and teachers, and also focuses on differences in the formation of professional identity and career orientation of men and women. The result of the survey of typical academic gatekeepers was their traditional, gender-stereotypical role model, which they incorporated into their promotion (*ibid.*, p. 216f.). According to Kahlert, this is particularly evident in five areas: first, in the understanding of the family division of labor; here, however, especially at the time of starting a family, it is stated that social expectations and political framework conditions also play a role, as do fixed-term contracts at universities (*ibid.*, p. 199ff.). Second, the interviewees addressed gender asymmetries in partnerships; the consensus here was that partnerships in the academic world are strongly hierarchically organized and the woman almost always subordinates herself to the man (*ibid.*, p. 202). Third, the stereotypical gender understanding of gatekeepers is also evident in the consideration of gender-differentiated career planning: gatekeepers considered women to be less willing to take risks, but attributed to them a stronger sense of security (*ibid.*, p. 204f.; Steffens and Ebert 2016, p. 119ff.; Pflugradt and Janneck 2012, p. 282ff.). Fourth, the gatekeepers also hold the work ethic in science, already discussed above, responsible for women dropping out of scientific careers, where total dedication to the subject and research is rewarded and, as it were, "belongs". The attitudinal character and the associated professional

insecurity also played a role here (ibid., p. 208). Fifth, the gender-stereotypical attribution of skills and competences—also discussed above—exists in the minds of gatekeepers, which they incorporate when promoting women (ibid., p. 212).

3.5 *The Micro Level: Discrimination of Female Physicists*

Gendered discrimination is no longer as directly identifiable and perceptible as it was some time ago: with the introduction of equality measures and a generally broader public, direct face-to-face insults or harassment have also decreased, as on the one hand, the inhibition threshold for such actions has been raised much higher, and on the other hand awareness has also grown that such statements are subject to negative social sanctions (Bucholtz 2011). However, this does not mean that sexism and discrimination have disappeared from our society; rather, the form of expression of sexist harassment has changed and is now much more subtle and hidden (in this context, one also speaks of “traditional” and “modern” sexism) (Steffens and Ebert 2016, p. 74). Open, direct insults are now replaced by more indirect acts, such as the denial of continued discrimination against women, lack of support for strategies to dismantle gender injustices and resistance to movements to achieve equal rights for women (ibid., p. 74). Indirect insults—or microaggressions⁴—are sometimes expressed so indirectly that those affected are often not sure themselves whether a statement by their counterpart should be classified as insulting or not, which does not legitimize their behavior but does not sanction it either (Sue 2010, p. 23ff.).

For gender-based microaggressions in particular, Sue (2010) identified a number of different indicators that point to indirectly discriminatory behavior: Making women sexual objects, for example, is just as indicative of microaggressive sexist behavior as treating them as second-class citizens. In addition, the use of sexist language, the assumption of the inferiority of women (often accompanied by a traditional understanding of

⁴Microaggressions are short, everyday indignities that are also conscious, but by definition mainly unconscious, and are mostly communicated verbally, nonverbally and through the environment (e.g., through laws, political attitudes or institutional barriers) (Sue, 2010, p. 5). The target of these attacks, which target the sexuality, ethnicity or gender of those affected, can be individuals as well as entire groups. Microaggressions, like openly discriminatory behavior, are a mechanism for exercising power and exclusion and have an exclusionary effect on the social position of those affected or marginalized groups (ibid., p. 16).

gender roles), as well as the denial of one's own sexism or sexist jokes (*ibid.*, p. 169ff.). Those affected by microaggressions most often reacted with inaction (*ibid.*, p. 55). This is due to the indirect nature and short duration of microaggressions, which makes it difficult for those affected to identify microaggressive behavior as such: By the time a microaggressive incident can be identified as such, they are already over; an appropriate defensive reaction cannot take place or can only take place with difficulty. In most cases, however, the incident is not even considered to be clearly discriminatory, so that those affected usually withdraw and inwardly evaluate what has happened rather than go on a confrontation course—often also because they fear negative consequences for themselves (*ibid.*, p. 55ff.).

Numerous studies show that especially women in STEM fields are confronted with microaggressions in their daily work and university life. In their study, Yang and Carroll (2016) were able to identify the criteria of microaggressions established by Sue (2010) in interview statements with women working in the STEM field and also found that the majority of the women interviewed not only experienced microaggressions on a daily basis, but that the intensity or frequency of microaggressive incidents differed greatly according to career level. Female professors with a full position, for example, experienced microaggressions most frequently in their daily work. Age also plays a role; here, it is also the oldest who encounter the most microaggressions (Yang and Carroll 2016, p. 8).

Barthelemy et al. (2016) show how strongly women in physics are affected by microaggressive behavior on the part of their fellow students and teachers. More than three quarters of the respondents reported microaggressive experiences from their everyday studies and work, most frequently concerning stereotypical gender roles, followed by the feeling of being a “second-class citizen” and the assumption of being less capable than their male fellow students (Barthelemy et al. 2016, p. 7ff.). Almost 23% of respondents also reported openly hostile sexism (*ibid.*, p. 10). Koul et al. (2016) analyze the connection between gender-specific discrimination and the physical–mathematical self-concept (or sense of academic belonging) in a comparison between students of mathematics and physics. The result of their research is that men have a stronger gender identity, which also plays a correspondingly large role in the formation of a scientific-technical identity and a positive self-concept in this respect. Women, on the other hand, feel negatively confirmed in their gender identity by the positive honoring of male attributes, as part of the self-concept

of science, which also has a negative effect on their scientific identification (Koul et al. 2016, p. 8; Willems 2007). A positive STEM self-concept has also been shown to have a positive effect on the learning and later work success of students in these subjects (*ibid.*, p. 2). Riffle et al. (2013) show in their work that the prevalence of stereotypes, gender discrimination and their toleration has a negative impact on job satisfaction. Accordingly, women in STEM fields feel little valued and little respected or even invisible in the workplace; the consequences are isolation, rejection and unequal treatment, which significantly contribute to lowering job satisfaction and can even lead to intentions to quit (Riffle et al. 2013, p. 228).

However, analyses regarding intervention patterns in cases of discrimination, harassment and a hostile work environment (Dahl 2021) show that the power balance between the genders in physics begins to shift in favor of female physicists. Here, differences in intervention strategies can be found depending on gender, status in the professional hierarchy, field of activity, and type of harassment. Surprisingly, it was mainly the female physicists in entry level positions (such as doctoral students or young professionals) who actively defended themselves and others affected against discrimination, sexual harassment and similar incidents at work by directly confronting the perpetrators (sometimes even higher-ranking colleagues) and openly addressing the nuisances.

4 CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter was to explore the question: To what extent are male and female physicists linked in an established–outsider figuration? Indeed, the longer access of men to institutions of higher education, such as universities, and therefore the subject itself, seems to have led to the emergence of a male-dominated disciplinary culture in physics, which over time has developed not only into an ideal image, but also into a norm. Those who do not conform to this norm are denied entry into the established group. Female physicists, on the other hand, have less group cohesion by comparison; they are less likely to be represented among colleagues, especially in prestigious top positions, and have greater difficulty forming and maintaining professional support structures. Moreover, discrimination and sexual harassment against female physicists have an equivalent effect to praise gossip and blame gossip. Both the confrontation with a masculine habitus in male-dominated fields and the devaluation of women by means of blame gossip apply to the relationship between male and

female physicists. The exclusion of women from academia in general, which has persisted to this day, can be traced back to an effort to maintain a surplus of (male) academic power. Doubts about the (gender) neutrality of science arose from the 1980s onwards, especially in women's studies, but also in science studies. The main points of criticism were the exclusion of women from the science system and the associated idea of femininity. This leads to the fact that gender is no longer defined as the sum of characteristics and abilities but can be assigned the role of a structural category, which makes it possible to regard gender as a "social place-holder" similar to "class" or "race" (Engler 1993, p. 24f.; Knapp 1988).

This macro-meso-micro link not only summarizes the organizational parameters of gender relations in physics, but also shows that men and women confront each other in an established-outsider figuration. This finding, of course, does not represent a permanent state, but is subject to constant change. Ernst (2003), Liston (2005), and Bucholc (2011) alike note that the exterior of the figuration between the genders in particular has undergone massive change in recent decades, beginning with the first and second waves of feminism, the entry of women into formerly male-dominated spheres such as top management positions and sports, and growing women's rights. This external change seems to favor an internal change, as can be seen, among other things, in the intervention behavior in cases of discrimination. Whether this discrimination is only reduced at the micro level and, for example, microaggressions against female physicists in the immediate work environment become less, or whether changes also become apparent at the meso and macro levels, will certainly not only be shown by a look at the statistics of the Nobel Prize, but also by a longer-term process sociological investigation.

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Refigured Homes: Gender Balances and the Refiguration of Spaces in Germany and Kenya

Jochen Kibel, Makau Kitata, and Nina Baur

I SOCIOLOGY OF GENDER AND FIGURATIONAL SOCIOLOGY: CHANGING POWER BALANCES AND THE GENDER DIVISION OF LABOUR

Gender researchers have often criticized that the “classical” European and North American sociologists neglected gender in their considerations. Norbert Elias is one of the rare exceptions, and figurational sociology has a long tradition of taking gender relations into account. Norbert Elias himself addressed the power balances between the genders (Elias, 1986), and since then, figurational-sociologist debates on gender have circled

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around issues such as informalization (Wouters, 1997; Wouters & Dunning, 2019), intimacy, sex and manners (Wouters, 2004) as well as marriage, the family and working life (Ernst, 1996, 1997, 2003, 2022a). Yet, the majority of European and North American gender researchers have mostly ignored these contributions.

This is all the stranger, as especially the theme of power balances between the genders directly links to key themes of European and North American gender research, as these power balances serve to exclude women from public space: Violence against women (which in Europe mostly takes the form of domestic violence and which we are not going to address in this chapter) and work- and family-related gender relations. In the latter context, much has been written about the household division of labour: In most countries—even if couples share egalitarian gender roles and if women are employed in the formal labour market—it is women who do the bulk of domestic work (including care work) (Nitsche & Grunow, 2016; Grunow, 2019); in middle-class households, the question only is, *which* women do the housework: a man's partner, his parents or a non-family-member who is paid for domestic labour (Grunow & Baur, 2014). Which type of woman does the housework and care work and to what extent middle-class women are available for the formal labour market, is largely influenced by care regimes (Aulenbacher et al., 2018; Williams, 2018) and their underlying gender ideologies (Grunow et al., 2018; Grunow & Evertsson, 2021). In most current societies, middle-class women can only follow a paid profession if they rely on (female) domestic workers for doing the house- and care work (Cheung & Lui, 2022). This points to a complex chain of interdependence both between the classes and on a global level, as domestic laborers are typically either lower-class ethnic minorities (Blofield & Jokela, 2018; du Toit, 2021) or international labour migrants (Paul, 2017; Lutz, 2018; Boersma, 2019; Chy et al., 2023).

In Sect. 2, we therefore will address the central problem by giving a brief historical overview of gender balances and housing architecture in Germany till the twentieth century. The missing link (Sect. 2.3) between figurational sociology, space, architecture and gender balances will be integrated by first reconstructing Elias's work on architecture (Sect. 3) and then theorizing the relationship between architecture and gender (Sect. 4). We will illustrate the fruitfulness of this concept by contrasting two empirical cases: According to Elias, architectural structures are always in line with a specific society—implying that the dynamic relationships

between the genders and architecture differ between societies. In order to illustrate this point, we will contrast Germany (Sect. 5) with Kenya (Sect. 6) as a contrasting society, focusing on the middle classes in the twentieth century. We will show that the household division of labour amongst middle-class families in Kenya and Germany plays out quite differently although the spatial arrangements of the houses have become increasingly similar. The figures of design (*Gestaltfiguren*) of the house may correspond with the social figures (*Sozialfiguren*) but not determine them. In Kenyan urban contexts, for instance, the relationship between middle-class and lower socio-economic strata is characterized by close spatial proximity, the availability of cheap labour but also the wide acceptance to employ domestic servants. This structures the gender balances differently. Domestic work in Kenya, however, remains highly gendered but is structured by a different (also spatial) relation between the middle classes and poor women.

2 GENDER DYNAMICS AND CHANGING POWER BALANCE IN A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

While current gender research can be well fitted into an Eliasian framework, in its process orientation, figurational sociology also allows scholars to reconstruct the socio-historical dynamics of power and inequality between the genders in order to understand the enduring long-term development of gender inequality in private and professional life as well as the formation of the difference between the private and public spheres (Ernst, 2022a, 2022b). In doing so, it points to a shortcoming of the majority of gender research, namely that power balances can change, as can be exemplified by examining the gender dynamics and the resulting household division of labour in Germany since the middle ages.

2.1 *Power Balance in Germany in the Middle Ages*

Historically, the European economic system was characterized by strong urban–rural differences. Regardless, in the pre-industrial period, the principle of the household as an economic, social and reproductive unit applied equally in the countryside and in the city: in the countryside that of the peasant farm, in the city that of the artisan and merchant families (Baur, 2007; Baur et al., 2019). Both in rural and urban areas, the household was

both a family and business unit, which on the one hand aimed at producing legitimate offspring and on the other hand, ensuring the family's economic livelihood (Ernst, 1996)—a goal that household members pursued jointly, which is why the differences between the rural and urban areas were greater than those between different genders and generations (Frevert, 1996). Within these units of reproduction, all classes cohabitated. Concerning gender balances, the house was headed by the male *Hausherr* (“homeowner”, “patriarch”) who in the villages was both landowner and manager of the production unit—that is: farm—and responsible for business outside the home, while in the city he was either a merchant or an artisan *Meister* (“master”) and headed the family business. The male head of the household protected the body and honour not only of his children but also of his wife, his servants, and his serfs, whereby “protection” included both physical protection and jurisdiction and ensured the household's livelihood.

In turn, this meant that all rights to marry, be legally sexually active, and reproduce were reserved to the *Hausherr* who was therefore also husband and father (*Hausvater*) (Lenzen, 1997; Hendrix, 1995; Baur, 2007). While there have always been extra-marital relationships in Europe, monogamy within Christian marriage served to limit the number of legitimate heirs. In order to control fertility and keep the population stable, men were only allowed to marry after they had acquired the means of providing for a family—which apart from men who emigrated or times of pandemics or fast increases in agricultural productivity—usually only happened, if they were first-born and their own fathers died. In the cities, the younger sons typically became apprentices and journeymen and could only marry if they founded their own business. If a master died without a son to inherit, the eldest journeyman (*Altgeselle*) married the master's widow or a daughter in order to provide for them—the younger journeymen (*Junggesellen*) were damned to be forever unmarried bachelors. In order to enforce these rules of reproduction, younger unmarried women—regardless, if they were daughters or domestic servants—were strictly separated from men. However, this only worked partially, and the theme of unprotected women such as female domestic servants being raped by the landlord or one of his sons, getting pregnant, and then getting kicked out of the house with a so-called bastard son is deeply engrained into cultural memory.

Turning from biological reproduction to economic production—that is, the family business—even then, a gendered household division of

labour was practiced: Both genders worked, which in the cities meant that typically one gender was responsible for the management, sales, and book-keeping and the other one was in charge of production (it depended on region, which gender was considered responsible for which task). However, if work involved traveling (such as long-distance trade), this was typically a male job, while women mostly took over the kitchen, housekeeping, and other domestic work (Baur et al., 2019). In correspondence with the master's role, the mistress of the house (*Hausherrin*) was responsible for managing the house and all tasks around it, especially as in many families, men were absent most of the time, for example, when they were traveling. This, in turn, meant that a wife needed to be intelligent and competent because otherwise, the family business would fail.

2.2 *Power Balance in Germany since the Nineteenth Century*

In the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there was a set of social processes which dramatically changed gender balances over the course of a century. For example, the state monopolized external (military) and internal (police, judiciary) violence, thereby disempowering the male household heads. Since then, for example, in Germany, “protecting” has been a state task, even if it is usually men who carry out this task in the public sphere—but the introduction of compulsory military service also created a separate sphere of masculinity (Frevert, 1996; Janshen, 2001). The invention of the ideal of romantic marriage overlaid the ideal of marriage as a business partnership. In the course of urbanization and industrialization, the workplace and home were separated (Habermas, 1990), and the public and the private spheres were delimited (Ernst, 2022a, 2022b). To frame it in the terminology of figurational sociology of markets, the contexts of production (production of goods) and consumption (consumption/private life) were separated and supplemented by a context of market withdrawal (buying/selling), that is a “public sphere” which linked them (Baur et al., 2021b; Baur, 2023).

This separation between production/public life and consumption/private life was coupled with changing class and gender practices from the very beginning (Ernst, 2019; Funder, 2017): In the course of industrialization, not only were workplace and home separated, but also now the social classes were separated from each other: While in the late middle ages and in the early modern age, typically all classes cohabitated under one roof in what was termed “the entire house” (*das Ganze Haus*) (Opitz,

1994), including large extended families as well as non-relatives (e.g. maids and servants), now families were reduced to “nuclear families” (*Kernfamilien*) only consisting of close relatives such as father, mother, non-adult children—becoming an adult now meant moving out of the parent’s household and founding your own household. Also, the lower classes (including domestic servants) now typically moved out of their employers’ houses and founded their own households in different quarters. For working-class women, this considerably reduced the risk of sexual abuse by ending the tradition of live-in domestic servants. The result was social segregation, as since then, all members of one social class have been typically living in one quarter and, in everyday life, only meet people from their own class—persons of other classes are only met at the workplace (context of production) or in public space, for example, when buying and selling goods (context of market withdrawal), but they usually do not know what happens in other classes’ home or even what they look like.

At the same time, gender balances shifted, as the intra-family gender division of labour that existed loosely and rather pragmatically before industrialization was ideologically cemented by the ideology of the separation of spheres (*Ideologie der Sphärentrennung*) (Habermas, 1990) and thus gained a qualitatively completely different connotation: In the bourgeoisie, the male breadwinner-female homemaker-model was established and now adhered to much more strictly than in the pre-industrial era (Ostner, 1995; Ernst, 1996; Pfau-Effinger, 1999): According to the ideology of the separation of spheres, men and women are complementary and responsible for different spheres of life (Behnke, 1997, pp. 67–68; Ernst, 1997; Funder, 2017, 446): The man is assigned the production of wealth outside the home (“breadwinning”), the woman consumption, domestic and care work in the household (“homemaking”) (Kocka, 1990; Schütze, 1988, 1991; Frevert, 1996). A man’s ability to make a career and be a good “breadwinner” became a key component of male self-definition. Slowly, the outward sign of a man’s professional success and thus of his social prestige became being able to afford that his wife was a “housewife” (Niehuss, 1999). This gender division of labour was interlocked with the idea of a division into (male) productive, paid, formal work and (female) reproductive unpaid, informal work (Degele, 2002, p. 91).

These gender norms became institutionalized when the German welfare state was designed, although only a few families were able to live this ideal in practice (Baur, 2007). After the First World War, these ideologies were reinforced both ideologically and institutionally. The importance of

the “housewife” as a distinguishing practice in bourgeois society was also reflected in the fact that in the 1950s, it was seen as a sign of rising social prosperity that broader sections of the population could now afford to practically live the breadwinner–housewife model (Lennox, 2005; Niehuss, 1999). In Germany, the subsidiarity principle engrained in the economic system, labour market legislation, social security systems, and gender arrangements mutually stabilize each other (Baur, 2007) which becomes obvious in the fact that since the 1970s, the male breadwinner–female homemaker-model has been increasingly contested. Regardless, the set of institutions continuously forces young couples into a more traditional household division of labour than they would want (Baur, 2008).

2.3 *Missing Link in Figurational Sociology: Space, Architecture, and Gender Balances*

While figurational sociology has for a long time pointed out and continuously conducted research on gender dynamics—that is temporality and processuality of gender relations—both gender research as a whole and figurational sociological gender research have mostly neglected the role of space and architecture in their analysis of gender relations. This is all the stranger, first, as Norbert Elias himself was one of the first sociologists to stress the role of space and the built environment both on the macro-level in “The Civilizing Process” ([1939] 1997) and on the micro-level in the “Court Society” ([1969] 1989). Even if space is addressed—such as in Ernst’s (2022a) recent account on salons, offices and private rooms—architecture remains mostly implicit. Second, this is also astounding, as the terminology (especially in German, which was Elias’ native tongue) both in everyday life and in analyses of gender is obviously spatial—such as “public space”, “private room”, “workplace” (*Arbeitsort*), “home” (*Wohnort*), “domestic work” (*Hausarbeit*) and so on. Literarily translated, the German word for “household” (*Haushalt*) means “upkeeping/holding a house”, and in everyday life, the words “household” and “family” are mostly used synonymously. Framed like this, women’s work is perceived as unpaid care work in the sphere of reproduction and localized as domestic work (*Hausarbeit*) in the household (*Haushalt*) at home (*Zuhause*; *Haus*). Whereas men’s paid work is associated with the sphere of productive work at the workplace (*Arbeitsplatz*; *Arbeitsort*) outside the home. However, in sociological gender discourse, little attention has been paid to how the complex interdependencies between materiality and

cultural aspects are structuring gender balances in different societies and result in different historical trajectories.

In contrast, sociologists of architecture and housing such as Dolores Hayden (1980, 1981) have stressed the role of housing architecture for gender balances. In particular, architectural sociologists have pointed out the *spatial* separation and gendering of the spheres of (male) production and (female) reproduction. However, these debates remain strangely delinked from mainstream gender research and mostly ignore the work on the household division of labour. In consequence, these approaches can show that material structures are crucial in structuring gender inequalities, but they cannot sufficiently explain the interdependencies that are centred around housing and gender, as the rather instrumental understanding of architecture in these Marxist approaches to housing and gender propagate falls short of including other elements such as various cultural and different historical trajectories. The role of architectural forms (such as the so-called Frankfurt kitchen to which we will come back later) for gender balances can only be fully understood against the backdrop of the entire corresponding socio-cultural background.

We will also link these concepts with the concept of the refiguration of spaces, introduced by Hubert Knoblauch and Martina Löw (2020, pp. 266–268), which describes the tension between different spatial logics and aims for a spatial understanding of societal change. Building on Elias ([1969] 1989, pp. 9–59), Knoblauch and Löw (2020) refer to a dynamic understanding of societies that are always refiguring themselves between structure and action. Fuller and Löw (2017) argue that built spaces, especially the architecture of homes, are not only a social product but also that the social is a spatial product and thus emphasize the importance of paying attention to historical socio-spatial arrangements as well as conflicts arising between figures of design (*Gestaltfiguren*) and culturally accepted social figures (*Sozialfiguren*) (Schubert, 2009).

3 SOCIOLOGY OF ARCHITECTURE AND FIGURATIONAL SOCIOLOGY: HOME-MAKING AS A MARKER OF SOCIAL DISTINCTION

In his study of court society, Norbert Elias ([1969] 1989) uses the aristocratic court of Versailles in the eighteenth century as an apt example of how a complex web of social relations is expressed spatially. However,

according to his interdependence theory and figurational sociology, this is only one side of the coin. The way of living and the possibility of fulfilling social obligations in turn have an effect on the social status of the inhabitants. The *monde* (Elias [1969] 1989, p. 87) of the court society not only represents the entirety of a complex set of social relations but confirms the social existence of the status holder, pointing to the importance of consumption and lifestyle as a form of distinction: A person's way of living mirrors not only social status but also (re-)produces it (Baur et al., 2019)—and it is not arbitrary, that in his own work, Elias mostly used housing and eating as case studies for consumption and lifestyles, as up to today, housing and eating are key markers for expressing social inequality (Baur & Kulke, 2023).

If the money is lacking, the rank and thus the social existence of the rank holder has only a very small reality. A duke who does not live as a duke should live, who therefore can no longer properly fulfil the social obligations of a duke, is almost no longer a duke" (Elias [1969] 1989, p. 99)

Elias shows that European nobility's lavish lifestyle not only contrasts bourgeois lifestyles that became established in the following centuries, and which follows an economic rationality. The aristocratic upper classes, as well as the lower official nobility (Elias [1969] 1989, p. 96), are also socially obliged to splurge and represent themselves. Their lifestyle thus follows entirely different rationalities than economic ones and is not even captured again by a calculation that appears even remotely economically "reasonable".

Concerning housing and architecture, it is important to keep in mind that European nobles had to express their social obligation to splurge and represent themselves mainly in the structural form of their living arrangements according to the conventions that applied to their respective social groups. More specifically, this happened especially through the expensive households and lavish living arrangements of the *grandes familles*, which were ruined as a result. Elias exemplifies this in his book by citing Duke de Croy, who stated at the end of the *Ancien Régime*: "Ce sont les maisons qui ont écrasé la plupart des grandes familles" (after Elias [1969] 1989, p. 85, 102). The historical example that Elias gives us by depicting the complex social game at the court of Versailles in pre-revolutionary France reveals how strongly architecture, spatial arrangements, economic aspects, social hierarchies, value attitudes, personal status, and even one's own

self-perception are interconnected. All these aspects form a field of interdependencies in which the change of position of one coordinate always affects the overall constellation of the social figuration. Thus (residential) “architecture [becomes] a repertoire of signs of social figurations” and is understood as a “socio-spatial process” in which the “figures of design also change in correspondence with the social figures” (Schubert, 2009, p. 53).

The spirit of Elias is reflected in recent work on the sociology of housing which—like Elias—conceives housing a relational web (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Kallio, 2016; Easthope et al., 2020), which links structural aspects, such as labour markets or state housing policies (Madden & Marcuse, 2016; Schönig & Vollmer, 2020) with the concrete materiality of residential architecture (Jacobs & Smith, 2008, p. 517; Jacobs & Cairns, 2008), social networks (Heslop et al., 2020, p. 1609) and which analyses how housing impacts on social status and social inequality. For example, Heslop et al. (2020) show that on a global scale, housing can be understood as a “relational entanglement of all manner of materials, knowledge, economies, regulations and policies”, although the nature of the relationalities can vary considerably (Heslop et al., 2020, p. 1607). Lena Kroecker (2020) pointed out for the Kenyan middle class that these “relational entanglements” can also mean moving one’s place of residence when retiring in order to secure one’s social status. Moving from an urban to a rural context seems to be a necessity for a big part of the Kenyan middle class as one of her informants puts it: “One fine day, when you retire, you need to move to the rural areas. The standard of living has to go down, and you need to have your own house” (quoted in Kroecker, 2020, p. 136).

Thus, if one understands housing not only as a passive activity but as a presuppositional and spatially productive activity, as Martin Fuller (2017, p. 605) suggested, then the dynamic web of relations between a person’s self-perception, their social and their built environment becomes clear. This implies that every form of home-making always has a dimension of self-making. Katharina Weresch (2006) stressed—also from an Eliasian perspective—that housing is highly relevant for subjectification: The specialization of status-specific norms in the floor plans of housing corresponds with the inner-worldly self-perception of the residents. With her view of processes of “residential civilization”, Weresch showed for German society how specific lifestyles are expressed in concrete residential architecture and how these change over time. There is not only a connection

between “social figure and design figure” (Schubert, 2009) and thus a connection between lifestyle and housing form, but also a dynamic three-fold relationship between status-specific norms, their specialization in the floor plans and the inner-worldly self-perception of the inhabitants, especially their body-related sense of shame and embarrassment (Weresch, 2006, p. 3447).

4 SOCIOLOGY OF ARCHITECTURE AND GENDER RELATIONS: FROM MATERIALITY TO GENDERED FIGURATIONS

Although Elias ([1969] 1989) mentioned the gendered spaces of the court society—for instance, in the clearly gendered and separated wings of the king and the queen—and also hinted at the transformation of gendered places at the advent of the bourgeois society which have been explicated by Ernst (2022a), Elias never made this an empirical focus of his work. Weresch (2006) instead showed how much gender domains differ between the courtly society of the eighteenth century from that of the bourgeois society of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For Weresch (2006, p. 3443), the “social and spatial control of the man over the woman [in the court society] is slight”. In the course of the nineteenth century, however, European residential cultures fundamentally changed:

In contrast to the aristocracy, bourgeois society is a working society. It separates its functions gender-specifically into non-domestic professional life and domestic private life. (Weresch, 2006, p. 3446)

The associated “gain in power of the bourgeois men” (Weresch, 2006, p. 3448) intensifies further in the course of the twentieth century and again finds spatial expression in changed floor plans of living arrangements, for example, the loss of the “lady’s room” (ibid). According to Weresch (2006), these changes go along with “inner-worldly self-perception” that are also culturally formed stereotypes, such as the “stay home wife” amongst middle-class women in Nairobi (Spronk, 2016, p. 18). Other than in the instrumental understanding of architecture for gender relations, like that of materialist analysis, the stereotypical social figures of the “housewife” are not only a one-way road deriving from architecture but instead a two-way road (Boatcă, 2013). Culturally and

historically produced social figures do not become irrelevant once the spatial forms of the households are refigured.

Although materialist analyses of gendered spaces in housing architecture focus on gender roles, they lose track of the complex web of tangible and intangible, structural and practical aspects that Elias calls “figuration”, as the work of architectural historian Dolores Hayden exemplifies. In her book *The Grand Domestic Revolution* (1981), Hayden reconstructs the history of what she calls “material feminism”. By this, she means a largely forgotten tradition of feminism that explicitly criticized the architectural and urban separation of the spheres of production and reproduction into differently coded and gendered spaces (Hayden, 1981, p. 1). Class analysis thereby becomes an analysis of gendered spaces. Since material feminist critique started with analysing the physical organization of the capitalist division of labour, which was seen as a reason for the production and consolidation of gendered spaces, material feminists resolutely sought to overcome this kind of social inequality through architectural solutions.

In order to overcome patterns of urban space and domestic space that isolated women and made their domestic work invisible, they developed new forms of neighborhood organizations, including housewives’ cooperatives, as well as new building types, including the kitchenless house, the day care centre, the public kitchen, and the community dining club. (Hayden, 1981, p. 1)

Just as Marxism lost sight of the “female half of the human race” (Hayden, 1981, p. 7), feminism detached itself from the claim to analyse the political economy. In order to overcome the double defect of a Marxism without feminism and feminism without class analysis, material feminist critique explicitly starts with the spatial organization of society, placing the architecture of the houses at the centre of consideration and critique. The return of material feminism to the analysis of the material basis of society, especially in its architecture, is expressed in writer Zona Gales paraphrasing Karl Marx, which Dolores Hayden in turn uses to clarify the perspective and demand of the material feminists: “the private kitchen must go the way of the spinning wheel, of which it is the contemporary” (Gale, 1919, quoted in Hayden, 1981, p. 17). Historically, however, the opposite happened. With the mass implementation of the ideal of living in single-family houses in the American suburbs, as propagated by the Hoover Commission Report “Home Building and Home Ownership”

and implemented 50 million times after the Second World War (Hayden, 1981, pp. 8–10), not only was the separation between the spheres of production and reproduction cemented in urban planning, but the spatial isolation of the “housewife” also reached its dubious completion.

For Hayden (1981, p. 28), it seems clear that “urban regions designed for inequality cannot be changed by new roles in the lives of individuals”. As a historian, architect and activist, Hayden instead proposed architectural interventions in the single-house suburbs of America. Since the spatial organization of domestic work is thus identified as a central production site of gender inequality, new architectural and planning solutions are needed (Hayden, 1981, p. 28). The spatial arrangement should offer more community spaces as well as infrastructures like childcare and community kitchens (Hayden, 1980, p. 184). Undoubtedly meritorious, Hayden points out the role of architecture for gender inequalities. However, she overemphasizes the role of architecture by seeing the cultural aspects as subordinate to it. The underlying line of thought here is the assumption that with the physical changes of the spatial arrangements social roles might change alike. In a classical materialist manner, this line of thought follows a one-way street from architecture to eventually changing social figures and gendered roles.

By acknowledging the devastating effects of the “structural disregard for reproductive and thus ‘women’s work’” (Frank, 2009, p. 261) that was “removed in real and symbolic terms from and out of the city and the public sphere” (ibid., p. 262), Susanne Frank shows how the new housing figuration was also accompanied by new role expectations and modes of subjectivation. In doing this, Frank (2009) points to the discursive construction of the social figure of the “housewife” from the beginning of the twentieth century until the 1970s. In contrast to Hayden, Frank thus stresses the cultural-sociological dimension of housing and gender balances. Architecture has increasingly isolated and invisibilized women’s task “to make a house a home” (Frank, 2009, p. 270) within the homes (ibid., p. 261). Unlike Hayden, Frank argues that although figures of design correspond with social figures (Schubert, 2009, p. 53), they are not determining them. Frank concludes: “Structural-spatial, physical-material structures [indeed] influence and shape, enable or hinder social action (of men and women) as well as social (gender) relations, *but they determine neither the one nor the other*” (Frank, 2009, p. 281, italics as in original).

The persistence of gender balances in the realm of housing and domestic work can also be shown by architectural inventions that explicitly tried

to emancipate women from the obligations of domestic work. The role of specific architectural forms for gender balances can only be fully understood under the horizon of the entirety of a social value system. Although a crucial element, the instrumental understanding of architecture, as propagated by Marxist approaches to architecture and gender, falls short of including other elements such as cultural and historical trajectories. In order to better grasp and theorize this entanglement of architecture and gender dynamics in the course of the civilization process, in the following we will compare two cases, namely Germany and Kenya. In this context, we would like to bridge the twofold gap between a figurational analysis without gender (Elias) and a material feminist approach without figuration (Hayden) by drawing briefly on the work of sociologist and former colleague of Norbert Elias, Margarete Freudenthal, and the inventor of the Frankfurt Kitchen (*Frankfurter Küche*), Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky.

5 ARCHITECTURE AND GENDER IN GERMANY AND KENYA

5.1 *Architecture and Gender in Germany*

5.1.1 *Traditional Housing and Gender (Pre-Twentieth Century)*

When looking at traditional housing in German cities, it becomes obvious that—similar to aristocratic households—the figures of design (*Gestaltfiguren*) reflect the culturally accepted social figures (*Sozialfiguren*). As Graph 10.1a illustrates, a traditional artisan or merchant house architecturally represented the unity of the household as a family and business unit: Typically, the kitchen—as a female space in which women both worked and watched the children and in which the members of the household mingled socially and for relaxation—was the heart of the house. The stove traditionally was not only used for cooking and heating water (for all purposes) but also for providing warmth in winter and—due to its central location on the ground floor—heating the other rooms of the house. The other rooms on the ground floor were typically reserved for production and sales, and the cellar and/or the attic were used for storage both of food, production materials and goods and for drying clothes.

The key role of the master and his mistress in a monogamous relationship was represented by them typically being the only ones having an exclusive room for themselves, which also separated the quarters of the

houses for the needs of the people living in them from a holistic perspective, that is, for form to follow function (Lampugnani, 2010). A whole group of architects and urban planners in the *Bauhaus* tradition worked on developing adequate housing for the new working- and middle-class nuclear families—one of the most prominent examples being Ernst May's project of "New Frankfurt" (*Neues Frankfurt*) in Frankfurt which particularly aimed at producing affordable housing. Rationalization and the standardized industrial production of living space (in order to minimize costs) were the guiding principles that were omnipresent in May's ideas for a New Frankfurt. Against the backdrop of Taylorist structuring and optimization of work processes, May experimented, if living spaces could be optimized according to these principles and industrially produced, too. For May's projects, housing was not only constructed with industrially pre-produced prototypes but also the arrangement of housing complexes followed strictly rational criteria.

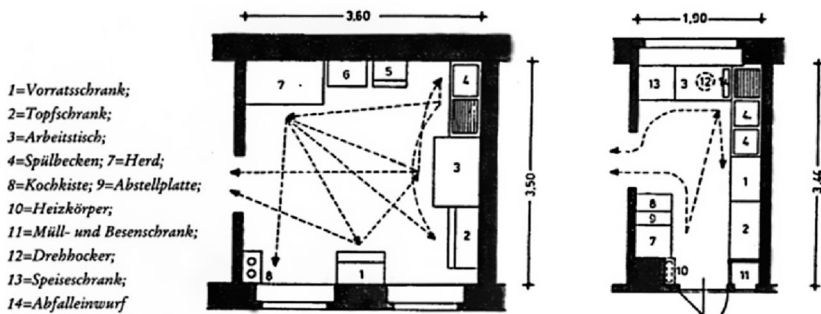
In this context, feminist architects aimed at redesigning housing for "modern" families and making working lives easier for women who now—as a result of the nuclear families—lacked the help of other women in the household. The idea was to reduce the overall workload reducing domestic work with the help of technological and scientific tools. This idea was most prominently realized in the so-called Frankfurt Kitchen (*Frankfurter Küche*) (Graph 10.2) developed by the Austrian architect Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky whom Ernst May invited in 1926 to work in the building department of the city of Frankfurt (Surmann, 2010, p. 1). Following the *zeitgeist* and inspired by Taylorism, the Frankfurt Kitchen "is the product of a design following rationality and function, an optimisation of work and movement sequences according to the precisely timed Taylor system" (Surmann, 2010, p. 3). As May did for the urban outdoor space, Schütte-Lihotzky did for interior design and designed her kitchen in way so as to optimize movement sequences and work routes, and to minimize the time spent on both movements and each individual task (Graph 10.3). Since the kitchen was to be exclusively monofunctional, it replaced the previously widespread kitchen-living room (*Wohnküche*) (Surmann, 2010, p. 1). In the sense of a rational division of functions, living and housework were now spatially separated.

5.1.3 *Effects of New Forms of Architecture on Gender Balances (Twentieth Century)*

The Frankfurt Kitchen can be considered a socio-technical project of reform. Nevertheless, this reform project was realized within narrow frames that not only left the gender division of labour untouched but in



Graph 10.2 Historical photograph of a Frankfurt Kitchen (Germany, late 1920s). (Source: Schütte-Lihotzky, 1927, p. 122)



Graph 10.3 Saving time and space with a rationally designed Frankfurt Kitchen (right). (Source: Andritzky, 1992, p. 104)

fact reinforced it. The “ambivalent relationship to gender order” (Moisi, 2019, p. 181; Silbermann, 1995, p. 24) consists in the fact that the improvement of “women’s work” through rationalization of work processes was achieved without questioning the naturalization of female, private reproductive work and male, public work in the sphere of production. In terms of gender balances, the technical and structural reform thus moved within a cultural framework that remained mostly unquestioned.

What also makes the example of the Frankfurt kitchen suitable for a figurational sociological comparison is the fact that the ideas of a rational household economy implemented in it were copied millions of times around the globe. This specific kitchen typology was not only implemented 10,000 times in Frankfurt alone in the 1920s (Noever, 1992, p. 5). Despite changes in design, the aspect of “rational handling” (Surmann, 2010, p. 4) of domestic work remained decisive for the typology of modern kitchens, which were installed millions of times worldwide, implicitly reproducing the ideas that Schütte-Lihotzky first applied and transferring them to cultural contexts with possible completely different ideas of how house and care work should be organized and who should conduct these tasks. The design of a kitchen is also not a stand-alone technology but embedded in and part of a socio-technological system (Bijker, 1997): In addition to the design of the room itself, the Frankfurt Kitchen inspired the standardization of household appliances such as stoves, fridges and furniture with standard measurements—as Germany was one of the leading manufacturers of household appliances in the post-war period, this resulted in these standards to be adopted in most world regions. This is not a trivial thing, as standard household appliances in turn force future architects to adapt their kitchen designs, thus limiting the range of architectural forms to specific sizes and forms—for example, with a modern kitchen design, it is very impractical to have round room walls.

The first profound analysis of the entanglement of changes in architecture and gender balances was provided by sociologist Magarete Freudenthal (later Sallis-Freudenthal) who was a contemporary of Norbert Elias, Ernst May and Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky. In her biography, Sallis-Freudenthal (1977, p. 79) mentions that amongst those people who made the “most lasting impression” on her was Ernst May. Enthusiastic about May’s revolutionary ideas and tremendous changes and as a colleague of Norbert Elias at the University of Frankfurt, she was the first German sociologist

who worked on the household economy, housing typologies, and their influence on gender balances (see also Jitschin, Keller und Seglow in this book).

Drawing on a historical overview over almost three centuries of the development of forms of housing and their corresponding social figures, Freudenthal was particularly interested in the changing roles of women. Thereby she describes a tension between what she has called spaces of living (*Lebensräume*) and spaces of action (*Wirkräume*). The spaces of living describe the social positioning, that is, a woman's position in the social hierarchy of a figuration as well as her economic position. The space of action describes the respective class-specific functions and requirements that a household has to meet (Freudenthal, 1986, p. 4). As a key result of her work, Freudenthal (1986, pp. 170–171) notes a shift from a production economy to a consumption economy. While in earlier times, it was normal for women to be involved in the productive household economy, this changed—especially for bourgeois women—from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards. Freudenthal thereby gives a socio-historical explanation of what later became the naturalized idea of the “female sphere of reproduction”. The “new ideology of the women” (Freudenthal, 1986, p. 170) reflects the new value system and moral canon of a consumption economy that has no use for the productive work of women and invisibilizes them in the increasingly private home. Also, Freudenthal shows how the tension between economic position and culturally produced requirements that are addressed towards women differ within societies, especially between bourgeois and proletarian households and gendered roles.

In other words, and as the above analysis has shown, gender inequalities in the realm of housing—although structured by architecture and economic aspects—always follow historical trajectories, cultural norms, and moral codes. Materialist or mere socio-economic approaches tend to lose sight of the latter. To put it in Freudenthal's terms, this means that the socio-economic position of the *Lebensraum* needs always to be put into relation to the culturally and also class-specific socially produced requirements, that shape women's spaces of (legitimate) action (*Wirkraum*). This will become clearer, if one contrasts the German case with that of Kenya, as we will do in Sect. 5.2.

5.2 *Architecture and Gender in Kenya*

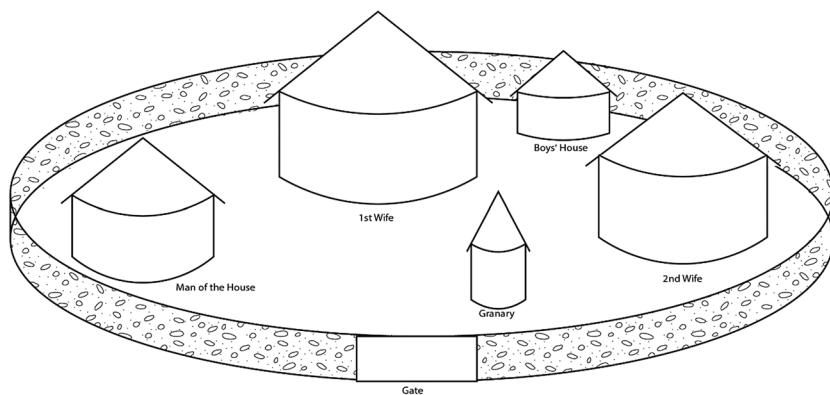
Elias not only showed great sensitivity for analysing social figurations *sui generis* and within their own value horizons and—having taught two years at the University of Ghana in the 1960s—was also one of the few sociologists of his time who had actually first-hand experience in the Global South. Irrespective of his actual success in doing so, he at least tried to take Ghanaian society seriously (Steinmetz, 2013; Reicher et al., 2022). In addition, current research, for example, in the fields of biographical research (Rosenthal & Bogner, 2017), migration research (Rosenthal, 2022), as well as the sociology of conflict, war and violence (Bogner & Rosenthal, 2018), has shown that figurational sociology can also fruitfully be applied to the Global South. However, concerning the relationship between architecture and society, it remains unclear what a figurational-sociological analysis of the French high nobility in the eighteenth century can contribute to the understanding of post-colonial societies in the twenty-first century. Regardless, Elias' socio-historical and interdependent view seems in principle compatible with post-colonial and interdependence-theoretical perspectives (Quijano, 2000).

Therefore, in this section, we aim to establish the entanglement of architectural and social formations of houses in Kenya. We analyse the historical transitions concerning house design, materials, shapes, and sizes of houses and how they have impacted the way gender is practiced in home spaces in Kenya over time. All in all, changes in housing and gender dynamics in Kenya follow a recognizable historical route with five phases: the early traditional structure; the period of missionaries and Christian influence; the British colonial influence; the period after independence; and the twenty-first century trends: “it is evident that East African architecture has evolved and has been influenced by foreign cultures. However, significant African elements still remain a testimony to the enduring nature of East African traditions” (Wanjiku & Maina, 2020, p. 2081). Although the circumstances of housing in Kenya have tremendously changed over time, cultural institutions have survived or transformed in dependence on material and spatial resources. Accordingly, house design in Kenya has been transitioning progressively. As people converted to Christianity, attained Western education, and got more urbanized, there has been a rise in Western-inspired house designs.

5.2.1 *Traditional Housing and Gender (Pre-twentieth Century)*

Traditionally, the Kenyan home has always been the woman's space where procreation was done—the home was her place of privacy. Beyond this, the homestead was a space for labour, security, and education and a materialization of various gender balances. The home was thus both symbolic and functional. In order to understand the entanglement of architecture and society in Kenya, one has to distinguish between the “home” and the “house”, which in Germany forms a unity, resulting in linguistic ambiguity, as *Heim* can both mean “home” (*Zuhause*) and “house” (*Haus*). In contrast, amongst the polygamous Agikuyu of Central Kenya (one of the biggest ethnic groups in the country), a group of houses made up a homestead—so a “home” and a “house” are not the same. A homestead consisted of the extended family. Several homesteads made up a village that had communal structures shared by all members. Also, building was a communal activity (Kamenju, 2013). Kikuyu houses were either circular, semi-circular, or rectangular (Graph 10.4). Kikuyu men build the house structures using wooden poles, mud and cow dung, while their wives thatched them using grass.

The house in the middle of the homestead facing the gate belonged to the first wife—each of the other wives had their own house. The man of the home had his house separated from the first wife by the cattle shed. He would either go to sleep in the house of one of his wives or remain in his

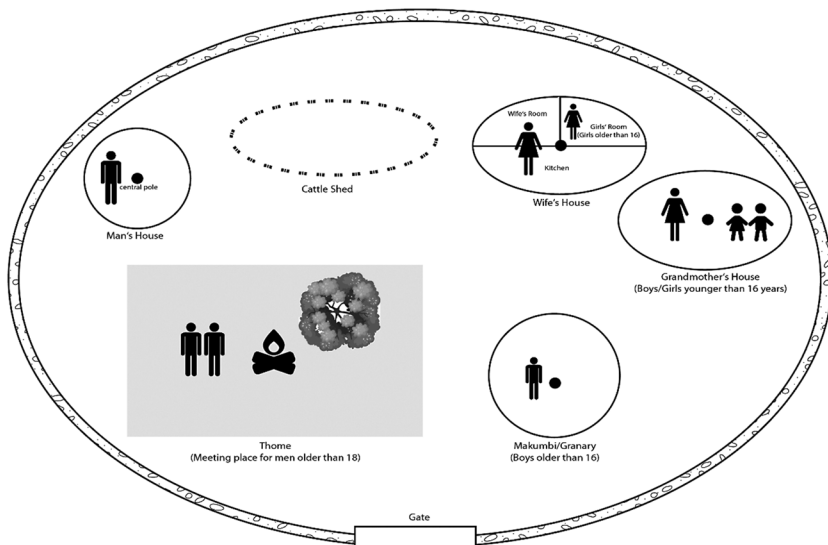


Graph 10.4 Kikuyu homestead. (Source: Depiction by Makau Kitata and Louis Speer)

house and summon any of his wives to join him. Also, there was a single food storage for the whole family in front of the wives' houses. At the centre of the homestead was a fireplace where men usually met to discuss family matters. Parties were usually held at the centre of the homestead at the fireplace. Different age groups and genders lived in different houses. Traditions and beliefs of the Agikuyu stated that men and women could not live in the same house. A woman would sleep in the same hut with her daughters and her younger sons (the latter only till the age of 14 years). Once the son was initiated into adulthood at the age of around fourteen through circumcision, he would have to move into his own hut known as *thingira* (Mũkũyũ, 2014). The traditional Kikuyu residential code provides for a specific arrangement of houses. The structural arrangement of the buildings in relation to each other reflects kinship relations. As in the courtly society described by Elias, the social values and social hierarchies are reflected in a regular spatial arrangement. Acting against this spatial arrangement puts the social status of the person in question and therefore its social existence at risk.

The Akamba (of South-Eastern Kenya) were also polygamous. However, typical housing arrangements differed from the Kikuyu. Here, a man usually built the house and the women thatched it. Amongst the Akamba, the homestead was called Musyi. Traditionally the largest visible tree (usually at the main gate) decided the placement of the structures in the homestead figuration. This space under the tree was called *thome* where men discussed family matters around an open fire. Women of the homestead were not allowed in the *thome*. (Mwendwa, 2001). The first wife's house faced the cattle shed followed by the second and third wives in that order. Men would marry as many wives depending on their wealth and status. The man could only leave his house for one of his wives' houses after midnight. He left the house again for his house at dawn. Young girls and boys before adolescence slept in their grandmother's house. Boys also stopped then staying in their grandmother's hut and began to sleep with the older boys in the small structures called Makumbi, also used as a food store. They didn't have their own houses. In the evening, they remained at the fireplace (*thome*) at the gate guarding the home with bows and poisoned arrows. They got their own hut when they got circumcised and were ready to get married. The boy's mother built the house for her son.

Older girls—16 and above—left their grandmother's house to live in their mother's house. The woman's house had two bedrooms: to the left was the big bedroom for the man and his wife, and to the right was the bedroom of the girl aged 16. Goats and calves were placed near the girls'



Graph 10.5 Kamba Homestead (Musyi). (Source: Own Depiction by Makau Kitata and Louis Speer)

beds to make it hard for them to escape without the mother's knowledge. In every house, there was a central pole that symbolized the foundation of the *home* and on which were placed bows and arrows for hunting (Graph 10.5). What the traditional Agikuyu and Akamba homesteads show, though slightly different, are clear-cut and gendered spaces. The living spaces not only materialize gender roles but also expectations based on age and status.

5.2.2 *The Missionary Influence on Gender and Housing (Nineteenth Century)*

In the nineteenth century, Christian missionaries arrived in Kenya as the precursors to colonialism (Thiong'o, 1993, p. 3). Cultural and religious colonialism preceded political colonialism. This impacted the socio-spatial imagination of the home and its infrastructure. The missionaries set up missionary centres with schools and churches across the country. They also taught young men carpentry, masonry, and construction skills while young women were taught domestic science, child care, and received physical and "moral" training, according to the new ethics propagated by the missionaries. The missionaries involved these trainees in building

churches and schools that they were setting up (Kamenju, 2013). Thus, missionary education inaugurated a decisive refiguration to architecture and gender.

Polygamous relationships were discouraged by the moral codes and values propagated by Christian missionaries. Along with Christian morals, new forms of housing took hold in Kenya. Therefore, the new regime of Christian values was also implemented by new architectural typologies as well as spatial divisions in the urban and rural alike, particularly in the housing typologies and materials. When coming back to their homes, young men would bring new technology, such as the use of iron sheets for roofing. The missionaries discouraging polygamy was the beginning of imagining the home as *one* house. Rectangular houses and new forms of housing that wouldn't allow hosting an extended family went hand in hand with the newly praised ideal of a nuclear family. The housing typology coincided with a shift in social figures.

5.2.3 *British Colonial Influence on Housing (Twentieth Century)*

After the arrival of Christianity, the British colonized East Africa in the early twentieth century. Christianity and colonial education affected housing design as the British had come up with new styles of home design. In an attempt to hasten this process, the British for instance burnt Agikuyu homes which were made of mud, sticks and thatch. Amongst communities where the British seized lands, the people were displaced from their traditional homes. In 1901, the British started to collect hut tax and pool tax in every native household in British East Africa to generate revenue. Those that could not afford the levy were forced into hard physical labour. In Kenya, this triggered the Mau Mau rebellion. The British used this rebellion as a pretext to force large populations into colonial villages like Kamirithu in Limuru (Thiong'o, 1993). In this system of villagization, many Kenyans were now housed in congested villages with administrative posts to instil compliance to colonial whims. They were allocated small plots per family and the concept of having a home on a small demarcated plot was institutionalized.

The consequences of colonial spatial politics of land eviction and the expulsion from traditionally cultivated land persist and shape modes of home-making in Kenya. After independence, those who had lost their lands began to rebuild their homes in a rectangular design inspired by the British system of land demarcation (Mabogunje, 1982). The Agikuyu (and many other Kenyan peoples) began to use wood for walls and iron sheets for roofing (Wanjiku & Maina, 2020). This was reinforced by the

independence elite under the leadership of those who had already embraced the new ways of British house design (Kamenju, 2013). Thereby physical and architectural forms were shaping social interactions as well as they were a consequence of changing cultural norms.

At the same time, Kenyan elites started to live in towns for the purposes of education and work. In Kenya as elsewhere in colonial Africa, the bungalow made its first appearance in the late nineteenth century as a racially defined dwelling type that suited the health needs of Europeans in the tropics. This single stand-alone house was a large cottage with a veranda. It was a “tool of empire” for European colonial administrators, allowing them to live in tropical climates and control large territories (Headrick, 1990).

The single-family house in villages continues to be a widespread ideal for middle- and working-class families in present-day Kenya (Cupers, 2021, p. 63). As after independence, racial segregation turned slowly into socio-economical segregation—most recognizable in the city of Nairobi—Kenyan elites (Graph 10.7a) have inherited the colonial use of the house in urban areas as a technique to build wealth and categorize races and classes. The houses are speculatively built, privately owned, and grouped in either single plots or gated community subdivisions. For this reason, housing in Kenya is part of the process of fashioning social and economic relations. Subdivided plots offer one way of doing so, apartments are another method (Graph 10.7b), while slums (Graph 10.7c) can be understood as the failure of both methods in Nairobi.

The single-family home in Kenya is a twentieth-century phenomenon and therefore a vastly colonial legacy. The values and gendered and social relations that are inscribed in this typology has become the dominant form of housing. It is a product of private landownership and a spatial expression of the European-Christian morality of the nuclear family. It is also a manifestation of the disruption of the homestead system and the separation between work and home. It is a product of twentieth-century modernization processes that displaced the earlier African traditional home setting. Just like the homestead stood for a larger interconnected environment, so does the single house struggle to accommodate the ties that define the self, family, and society in Kenya.

While the typology seems to be similar to a more globally adapted form of housing, this is far from being equal to housing in the German context, although the figures of design (*Gestaltfiguren*) may look strikingly similar. Despite the fact that the current forms of Kenyan housing were originally introduced from Europe, the pre-colonial cultural codes—for example, the above-mentioned spatialization of social values, hierarchies, and kin

relations—are often still reflected in the spatial arrangement of ancestral homes in rural areas in Kenya. Acting against this spatial arrangement still can put the social status of the person acting against it in question. Interesting from the perspective of the refiguration of spaces is that a vast part of the Kenyan *urban* middle class—which in European conceptions of class would be more upper classes, as they represent only a small percentage of the overall population—also identifies themselves with a *rural* home. This means that most people of the Kenyan middle class are interwoven into two spheres of socialization—urban and rural. The spatial logic of each of these arrangements follows different cultural codes. Since investments into houses in the city and homes upcountry are both economic challenges and social obligations, they put these two different modes of home-making into a tension that we address as a refiguration.

5.2.4 *Kenyan Houses and Gender Balances in the Twenty-First Century*

In the twenty-first century, traditional African houses are associated with low-income households. In Kenya, these traditional houses are only found in rural areas (Graph 10.6) where they are associated with poverty. The houses are also curated in cultural centres for tourists. These types of house designs are cheap to construct as materials are readily available in rural areas.

Western civilization stone houses are associated with status and privilege. Materials for house building are now masonry stones and iron sheet roofing. In the contemporary setting, few homes are informed by African culture. Generally, homes (Graph 10.7a) replicate the nineteenth-century



Graph 10.6 Current Kenyan Rural Ancestral Homes (Karatina 2022). (Source: Photos by Nina Baur)

(a) Upper(-Middle)-Class Housing (Kasarani)



(b) Lower-Middle-Class Housing (Kasarani)



(c) Working-Class Squatter Settlements (Gituamba)



Graph 10.7 Current Kenyan urban housing types (Nairobi 2022). (a) Upper(-middle)-class housing (Kasarani). (b) Lower-middle-class housing (Kasarani). (c) Working-class squatter settlements (Gituamba). (Source: Photos by Nina Baur and Elmar Kulke)

British upper-class house: veranda, lounge, dining room, bedrooms, bathrooms, storage, and backyard. It is the conventional one-house home design. Rooms now represent the houses that were separate in the traditional home. So, while in Germany, in the course of the civilizing process, gender differences were reinforced by architecturally assigning the different spheres to different spaces, in Kenya, with the coming of Christianity—which insisted on one wife—and colonialism—which institutionalized smaller home units—gender was diffused. The female sphere became part of the male sphere with walls acting as the boundaries within a small space. The bathroom is now shared between the man and the woman. Thus, female privacy was diminished, resulting in many gender-based conflicts because of a loss of esteem for women's spaces.

However, the power shift is not as one-sided and unilinear, as it might seem at first sight: Due to the effects of Christianization and subsequent colonialism, polygamy is not openly practiced anymore. But even today, men still have families outside their official homes. In urban areas, home-making under such circumstances is usually practiced in rental apartment homes (Graph 10.7b). Here, the house offers a kind of separation from what would have been a homestead in a village. The size and amenities of a rented home depend on a man's affluence. This new system of dividing up the homestead into different apartments has also brought about different levels of gender dependence. The man in a polygamous relationship with a woman who has children—even from previous relationships—will provide for her family by renting an apartment—each wife gets her own rented apartment. Moreover, in the cities, power balances sometimes have shifted in favour of the woman, as today, some women, too, have economic means and can afford to live with a man of lower economic status. This man provides social and symbolic services in the home while occupying a subordinate status in the house.

Regardless of who pays for the rent, fundamentally, the house has remained a woman's space in Kenya's spatial self-perception. In contrast, men have lost their space in the modern home in Kenya. The man will either have a chair reserved for him where he can have some control of the TV remote, or he can join his equally displaced male colleagues in the local bar, within a rapidly urbanizing Kenya. Furthermore, in contemporary Kenya, the signing of pre-nuptial agreements between couples is gaining popularity, since marriage is no longer viewed as a permanent union.

Finally, while in Germany, in the course of the civilizing process, domestic servants were removed *from* the household, in Kenya, urbanization has

brought a new concept of the house help (who is in almost always female) in bringing up children *into* the household: Previously, a grandmother or a neighbour would take care of the children. Since the modern Kenyan woman and mother is now a working professional, the role of the house help in taking care of the children and house chores has taken root, and along with the closer proximity and the smaller housing units especially in urban contexts, care work was increasingly delegated to domestic workers.

However, resembling court servants in the “Court Society” (Elias [1969] 1989), the female domestic workers are so invisibilized in everyday interactions that they do not even appear as household members in qualitative interviews—if one asks who lives and works in a family, a Kenyan middle-class interviewee typically answers, “my spouse, my children and me”. Only if explicitly asked: “Do you also have a house help?”, does one get an answer. Correspondingly, the presence of domestic workers in Kenyan homes is not part of the architecture of the house. In such a setting, the house help can only live in the living room, the kitchen or—if there is room in their room—with the younger girls in the girls’ room. Although an indispensable working force for double-income middle-class families to cope with the challenges of the working life in Nairobi, the existence of the domestic worker—the house girl—is not mirrored in the architecture of the houses. The presence of the house girl is not materialized in the housing units whereas her work is even invisibilized through social practices. The house help in Kenya is popularly called “Auntie”, a naming system that sees her from a child’s perspective. This naming conditions her treatment and placement in the middle-class home structure. On the one hand, the person doing the household chores is indispensable in order for the middle-class family to achieve its aspirations. On the other hand, the house help is subjected to middle-class systems of identity formation within the home as a social institution. Within it, the man wields patriarchal governance with the woman of the home exercising devolved sovereignty and the house help at the bottom of that self-determining order. The subjection is mediated by discourses and structures (Foucault, 1984)—the totality of social and symbolic orders such as housing, working and sleeping arrangements.

If they do not live in the house with their employers, day service house helps usually live in the slums adjacent to the middle-class neighbourhoods. Fundamental to slum dynamics are ecological precariousness, toxicity and impending disaster (Davis, 2006). The slum system itself is characterized by deep poverty and violence. Squatter settlements such as

Kibera, Gituamba, Mathare and Mukuru in Nairobi are certainly shaped by the politics of destitution. They are places with different forms of gender marginalization. But Nairobi slums (Graph 10.7c) are also spaces of everyday life, with homes that fulfil roles similar to those fulfilled by houses elsewhere in Kenya albeit precariously. Homes here too provide a sense of self and community. The house helps daily create a socio-spatial link between the slum and middle-class neighbourhoods.

6 CONCLUSION

Focusing on the household division of labour, in this paper, we have first shown that the Eliasian concept of “power balances” not only helps to better theorize typical findings of gender sociology but also the process orientation of figurational sociology helps grasp how gender dynamics are deeply rooted in history. In adding the figurational sociological idea of the importance of architecture and space, we have linked gender sociology and the sociology of architecture and integrated this into a figurational-sociological framework. In doing so, we have shown how the power balances between the genders are reflected and structured *in* and *through* architecture.

In contrast to an instrumental understanding of architecture, we argued that, for example, the gender division of labour and the respective gender balances are always embedded into figurations that entangle cultural norms, materiality and spatial relations alike. According to Elias, architectural structures are always in line with a specific society—implying that the dynamic relationships between the genders and architecture differ between societies. In other words, architecture influences but does not determine social processes. However, architecture and urban design decelerate social change and stabilize it by creating at least some path-dependence (Baur et al., 2021b; Baur, 2023)—as the Kenyan case study reveals, once it is there, people can adapt to it and use it in different ways than it was originally intended, but they still have to accommodate to its spatial logics to some extent. This helps to explain a puzzle that gender sociology has been struggling with for decades: Why do people practice different lifestyles than they want to? Why do gender balances not change as fast as the changes in attitudes do imply? In this context, one of the questions to address in future research is if all phases of architectural practices are of equal importance and how they are related to urban and transport planning. For urban design, research indicates that in a city’s and

neighbourhood's formative phase (Berking & Schwenk, 2011), architects, urban designers, traffic planners, and civil engineers materially objectify the subjective and institutional spatial knowledge of the respective time in the urban design of the neighbourhood and the traffic routes as well as the placement of buildings in the neighbourhood, and these are based on the assumption on a gender division of labour, too (Baur & Kulke, 2023). Once in place, a city's original grid—that is the general outline of the city, the layout of its streets and squares, the plot structure, and the location of key buildings—usually does not change at all (Mehlhorn, 2012, p. 13). However, as our analysis reveals, other than urban design, architecture of single houses seems to be much more flexible, as individual buildings might be torn down and replaced by other buildings—so how are the figures of design architecture and urban design create related, and what does this imply for gender relationships?

The above analysis also reveals that there are phases of stability when social figures and figures of design are aligned and phases of change—these might differ cross-culturally as part of drag effects of social life. For example, when it comes to the entanglement of architecture and gender balances different phases can be distinguished, in Kenya and in Germany. These phases also differ in their length and the timing of key events, and there might be some lag between social change and changes in figures of design. For example, in Germany, it took more than a hundred years for architects to develop new architectural forms better suitable for the new society. Also, the same architectural form may have different effects—in Europe, it enforced the separation of spheres, limiting women to the house. In contrast, in Kenya, it blurred the separation between male and female spaces, thus robbing women of their privacy but at the same time robbing men of their male-only spaces. It also becomes clear, that the mere concept of the public and private sphere is very European and needs to be completely rethought in Non-European contexts.

Our analysis also shows that processes and effects are not equal across contexts. For example, while in Europe, the civilizing process resulted in female domestic labour mostly vanishing or at least taking the form of paid employment hired outside the home, in Kenya, the process moved in the opposite direction, namely introducing female domestic labour, including possibly exploitative structures. Our analysis thus reveals that future research needs to pay much more attention to different cultural contexts, especially taking diverse cultures of the Global South more seriously and asking how, for example, gender assumptions implicitly ingrained in

figures of design create prevailing social and spatial conflicts in the Global South. In a second step, an issue would be how to overcome these conflicts, under the assumption that architecture and urban design in their materiality have a stabilizing effect.

When reflecting on why the relationship between architecture and society differs between societies, it is also useful to refer to the concept of “refiguration of spaces” mentioned above. Löw (Löw, 2020; also Löw & Knoblauch, 2021) stresses that social interactions do not only take place in time but always take place somewhere. Therefore, any social interaction has a specific extension in physical space—its spatial arrangement (*Raumanordnung*), which is organized according to a specific spatial logic (*Raumlogik*), creating a specific spatial figure (*Raumfigur*). In order to keep up the chain of interdependence, actors have to accommodate to these respective spatial logics. For example, the home is organized as a space of place (*Ortsraum*) which follows a logic of intersection (*Logik der Überlappung*). In contrast, rooms, houses or homesteads are territorial spaces (*Territorialraum*) characterized by a logic of demarcation (*Logik der Grenzziehung*). This differentiation helps describing how the cultural differences between Germany and Kenya are reflected spatially: In Germany, the home and house fall together—simultaneously following a logic of intersection and demarcation. Since industrialization, homes are linked to workplaces by roads which follow a logic of transit (*Logik der Durchquerung*) as people commute along the space of pathways (*Bahnenraum*). Both historical and modern figures of design (*Gestaltfiguren*) reflect the respective social relations adequately. In contrast, in Kenya, the home and house have always been separated social forms which historically were integrated by the figures of design of the homestead. However, the adaption of European architecture-imposed figures of design adequate for European societies but *not* for Kenyan societies. This creates what Knoblauch and Löw (2020) call “spatial conflicts” (*Raumkonflikte*)—that is, actors have to simultaneously accommodate conflicting interaction rules. Therefore, another line for future research is to ask, how actors handle these spatial conflicts and how this affects gender dynamics.

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Rural Masculinity in Poland: The Established, the Outsiders and the Rural–Urban Divide

Marta Gospodarczyk

1 INTRODUCTION

The social world is filled with “essentially contested concepts” (Gallie, 1956)—concepts that are widely agreed upon but are not necessarily the best possible realization of what they represent. Such is the case with masculinity, a concept that became so omnipresent, that it became nearly transparent; the masculine was simply human (see Haraway, 1997, p. 32). On the surface level, masculinity can just be described as a set of attributes and characteristics ascribed to men—all men. However, as one begins to

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investigate further, a plethora of questions arise. Why these characteristics? Is masculinity a monolith? Is there any way of distilling what makes men men?

These questions are a starting point for this chapter, as I intend to investigate the differences in the performance of masculinity of rural and urban men in Poland: What makes a rural or urban man? What are the characteristics ascribed to these masculinity models, and how do they relate to each other? The basis for these considerations is Raewyn W. Connell's notion of hegemonic masculinity—that there exists a form, a model of masculinity, that allows those who perform it to assume control over women and other men, who do not (or cannot) follow that model. Of course, the basis for that claim, in turn, is the acknowledgment of the existence of *many* masculinities, which are produced in and shaped by historical, social, and economic contexts (Connell, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Wedgewood, 2009). The other fundament of this chapter is the established–outsiders framework described by Norbert Elias and John Scotson in *The Established and the Outsiders*.¹

The established–outsiders framework is well suited to the explanation of the relationship between urban and rural residents in contemporary Poland. I argue, that the demarcation line between the two is the perceived level of adaptation to the conditions of the market economy installed in Poland after the fall of communism in 1989. I will marry Connell's hegemonic masculinity framework with Eliasian theory of inter-group relationships, by showing that the established in this particular case—urban, upper-middle class Polish men—perform hegemonic masculinity, excluding the outsiders—rural men—from their ranks, thus ensuring their domination. This is not to say that the outsiders are fully reconciled with their fate. The relationship between the two masculinities is a relationship of push and pull, of protests and fights over the claim to the status of “respectable” masculinity, as will be evidenced by an analysis of the emblematic figure of Polish rural masculine politician—Andrzej Lepper.

Therefore, I will first provide a brief historical overview of the rural–urban relations in Poland, as well as sketch out the current socioeconomic context. I will then move on to discussing Connell's theorization of masculinities and will follow with a discussion of the interactions between rural and urban Polish models of masculinities, exemplified by the outsider farmers' movements in contemporary Poland.

¹Originally published in 1965; in the chapter, I cite the 1994 edition.

2 THE TWO POLANDS: HISTORY OF THE POLISH RURAL- URBAN DIVIDE

In the early days of Polish statehood, Polish society was starkly divided into two parts: nobility and peasants. Unlike in Western Europe, for example in Germany or the Netherlands, townspeople were largely politically and culturally marginalized. According to most estimates, nobility made up approximately 10% of the society and dominated the political landscape. Since the sixteenth century, Polish kings were chosen in free elections by noblemen, who had the power of *liberum veto*, meaning that any single member of the Sejm (the legislative body) could immediately stop any vote by his disapproval. Therefore, since Sejm's cooperation was required for most of the important decisions, the king's power was largely constrained by the members of the noble strata (for a succinct overview of early modern Polish history see Davies, 2005).

The overwhelming majority of the Polish population were peasants, based in the rural areas and chiefly finding occupation in agriculture. Until 1864, peasants and nobility were bound by the relationship of serfdom. Peasants were dependent on feudal lords—the nobility; they were tied to the land (could not leave the feudal lord's domain without permission) and a considerable amount of their work was done for the benefit of the feudal lords (see, e.g., Gorecki, 1983). The feudal economy was a main feature of the Polish economy until the eighteenth century (for an overview, see, e.g., Millward, 1982). Nobility enjoyed domination in both economic and cultural spheres, as they were the ones thought to be truly 'Polish', in that they were the carriers of Polish cultural and political thought. Until approximately the nineteenth century, peasants did not identify themselves as Polish, rather being connected to their immediate geographical area (e.g. Struve, 2008). A stark divide was created—between full citizens (noblemen) and peasants (non-citizens) (see Zarycki et al., 2022, p. 3; for an overview of the situation of peasants in serfdom Poland see Kieniewicz, 1970; Kuligowski, 2016).

In the nineteenth century, Polish serfs were enfranchised and became free citizens—at least legally. In 1921, all aristocratic and monarchy titles were constitutionally declared as not recognizable by the state. The descendants of nobility became a part of a new dominant sphere of society, which is referred to as intelligentsia. Intelligentsia, as per Tomasz Zarycki, is "(...) usually defined as an autonomous social class characteristic only of some nations (...) seen as a substitute for the underdeveloped or

non-existent bourgeoisie in Central and Eastern Europe” (Zarycki, 2003, p. 93). Intelligentsia was formed from descendants of nobility and cultural or political elites, and possessed significant cultural, material and social capital, to use the terminology of Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of capitals (see, e.g., Smoczyński & Zarycki, 2017, 2021). Intelligentsia was (and to an extent remains) a primarily urban social class of white-collar professionals, which lends potency to the argument for the existence of the rural–urban divide.

The legacy of serfdom carried over until the Second World War; the economic standing of rural areas was significantly lower than urban areas. Rural Poland was overpopulated, and the agricultural production mode was outdated and inefficient due to the lack of capital needed for modernization. The dominant attitude of peasants was that of disenchantment and disappointment towards the urban elites and descendants of nobility. After the Second World War, Poland became a satellite state of the Soviet Union. On face value, the communist government touted the emancipation of peasants; for example, in 1944, land previously belonging to the magnates and descendants of nobility was distributed among the peasants (Błąd, 2021). The communist government also initiated ambitious enterprises, for example, electrification of rural areas and education reform, which eradicated illiteracy almost completely. However, the chief objective of the government, especially in the 1950s, was industrialization. Marx and Engels write in *The Communist Manifesto* that the bourgeoisie has managed to “rescue a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life” (2019, p. 14); paradoxically, in Poland, a land with precious little bourgeoisie, it was left for the post-war communist government to rescue the rural population from said “idiocy”. The communist government set out to do what the weak bourgeoisie could not. Industry was believed to be a pathway for modernization, the way towards economic power; as such, cities and newly built factories reaped the benefits of public policies, while the rural areas remained largely neglected, and the efforts to modernize and rationalize agriculture were lacking. The situation slightly changed in the 1970s, when peasants got the right to retirement plans and were relieved of their duty to supply a part of their crops and livestock to governmental agencies. By then, peasants were increasingly often referred to as farmers, by the government and by themselves. This shift in nomenclature was an attempt to elevate the status of the rural population, a casting of praise-gossip that suggested that the rural population has become modernized and full-fledged members of communist

society. However, after the fall of communism in 1989, the rural population was among those most heavily negatively impacted by the economic reforms directed at the transition towards a market economy, which resulted in shifting attitudes towards the rural population.

Currently, the characteristics of the rural-urban divide in Poland are much more nuanced than ever before. Due to rapid suburbanization, and an expansion of cities into neighboring terrains that were previously villages, many places that would previously be designated as rural become (sub)urban. They become populated with city residents, usually middle- or upper-class, searching for a more peaceful life and accommodation that is more spacious and cheaper than the city allows. These places have an in-between status; not quite villages anymore, but not quite cities yet, either. As such, they can sometimes cloud the previously stark division between cities and rural areas. Rural Poland is also in the process of deagrarianization—the number of its residents that are employed in agriculture is dropping, which means that one of the most prominent characteristics of rural areas is becoming of less importance.

Nevertheless, this phenomenon is mostly restricted to areas in close proximity to cities. Residents of rural areas remain statistically poorer—in 2021, rural households reported an average disposable monthly income that was almost 30% smaller than urban households (Statistics Poland, 2022, p. 8). The divide is also political in nature; rural voters tend to be more conservative and more likely to support right-wing politics, while urban voters swing more towards the liberal or progressive side of the political spectrum (Bański et al., 2009). Similar discussions were conducted in the United States after the 2016 election when Donald Trump's victory was described as a clear sign of discontent from rural working-class workers; a mutiny of sorts, raging against the political hegemony of liberal, urban establishment (see, e.g., Hochschild, 2016). Since 2015, the Polish political scene is dominated by the right-wing party of Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, further referred to as PiS). PiS has won virtually all national-level elections, and some local elections, with the exception of most of the urban areas (see Szczerbiak, 2016, p. 11). This winning streak was framed by political commentators and scientists as a sign of rural, less-educated voters being disappointed by the liberal establishment, which was seen as only working for the benefit of urban voters. Therefore, a chasm is created between the rural and urban populations; rural voters accuse urban middle- and upper-class as being elitist and unconcerned with the well-being of rural populations, while urban

dwellers consider rural voters uneducated and unable to correctly grasp issues that are not directly connected with their material interest.

Interestingly, the discursive rural–urban divide is also based on the attitude toward modernity. After the fall of communism in 1989, Poland underwent a series of rapid changes to its political and economic system, including, but not limited to, the privatization of state-owned factories and enterprises (for an overview see, e.g., Klein, 2007; Wisła & Nowosad, 2020). In rural areas, this meant the closures of state-owned farms, which left their workers jobless, and cuts to funding of public transport, which left a significant portion of the population stranded and dependent on expensive automobiles. At this time, the rural population that engaged in protests against the (neo)liberal policies were often referred to as “brake-men of progress” by the urban mainstream (see, e.g., Bucholc, 2020). They were accused of not understanding the necessity of reforms, which were aimed at “catching up” to the Western European standard of living (see, e.g., Struzik, 2016). A popular discursive figure in Polish socio-political writings at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries was *homo sovieticus*—‘the Soviet Man’, or a person shaped by years of communism, with no individual initiative and agency, passive, distrustful, uninterested in the common good, and generally unfit to assimilating into new, capitalist society (see Tyszka, 2009; Sharafutdinova, 2019; Kolasa-Nowak, 2018). This concept was often used against those who were unable to succeed in the new realities of the market economy in Poland, implying that their problems stemmed from their individual shortcomings as Soviet Men and Women.

The rural—urban relations in Poland are fraught with distrust on both sides, stemming from the long history of cultural and material dominance from the elites, which are mostly situated in urban areas. One of the markers of respect attributed to social groups in Poland is the degree to which said groups were able to participate in and adapt to new conditions of market economy post-1989. In other words, there are “winners” and there are “losers” of the 1989 transformation. Whether a group won or lost is, in turn, explained not by structural factors, but rather by moral attributes such as flexibility, entrepreneurial spirit, diligence, or lack thereof. Since the rural population was one of the groups that—statistically—lost the transformation, in terms of their income and mobility, the image of the group is that it consists of *homines sovietici*, who are unable to sufficiently adapt to the new conditions due to moral and character failings. This image of the rural population stems from the structure of Polish

society through the ages—years of serfdom and feudalism, negligence to properly develop rural economy, and the industrialization that was an *idée fixe* of the communist government. Subsequently, the image of rural men is informed by these notions of rurality, which are incompatible with the modern model of respectable masculinity.

3 NO ONE IS BORN A MAN? DEFINITIONS OF MASCULINITY

In the process of defining masculinity, it is easy to fall into a trap of an easy approach, of creating a simplistic definition that does not sufficiently capture the intricacy of gender as a category. Raewyn Connell differentiates between four approaches to defining masculinity: the essentialist approach chooses one, or few, core features of masculinity (e.g. physical strength and lack of vulnerability, or activity as opposed to passivity). The positivist approach is concerned with facts, or “what men actually are”—for example, psychologists who construct Male/Female scales of behavior and categorize some behaviors as masculine or feminine. The semiotic approach constructs masculinity in opposition to femininity (what is masculine is what is not feminine). The normative approach defines masculinity via norms—what men ought to be to be considered men.

All these approaches are in a way flawed. The essentialist approach begs the question of arbitrariness—who chooses, what is the core feature of masculinity? In what context? The positivist approach does not consider the fact that to even begin the sorting process of facts and people into masculine or feminine, one has to have preconceived notions of what facts and people to be included were. Indeed, “to start compiling an M/F scale one must have some idea of what to count or list” (Connell, 1995, p. 70). The normative approach omits the fact that many norms of masculinity—for example, strength or independence—are met by few. Is the norm really the norm, when it is met by hardly anyone? Finally, the semiotic approach, while free of the limitations of essentialist or positivist approaches, has limitations of its own. Raewyn Connell points to the fact that the semiotic approach is bound to the discursive sphere. Social analysis is not restricted to discourse, thus rendering the semiotic approach limited.

Raewyn Connell proposes a way of defining masculinity that is primarily concerned with the organization of social practice. The onus of analysis must be put on relationships between men and between women and men,

and the way in which they lead gendered lives in particular social-historical-economic contexts. To quote Connell:

‘Masculinity’, to the extent the term can be briefly defined at all, is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture. (1995, p. 71)

This is the definition that I have adopted in my endeavors. I believe that this approach is best suited for the analysis of masculinity which is primarily concerned with the way gender informs relationships between men.

The other key concept of Raewyn Connell is hegemonic masculinity. The term hegemony, as coined by Antonio Gramsci, is a dynamic that allows a group to claim and sustain a leading position in social life. To put it simply, hegemonic masculinity is a form of masculinity that is dominant not in a qualitative sense—it is not performed by most men—but those who do perform it, and fulfill the hegemonic masculine ideal, enjoy social and cultural supremacy over women and other men. It is an ideal, something to aspire to; to quote James Messerschmidt and Raewyn Connell herself:

It embodied the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men. (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832)

It is worth noting, that the hegemony of a certain model of masculinity need not be upheld with violence, but rather with culture and institutional factors (*ibid.*).

Some forms of masculinity compete with each other over the hegemonic status, or over recognition as “true” masculinity. I believe that such tensions are currently present in Poland, between the “established”, urban and “outsider”, rural masculinity. Cas Wouters and Bram van Stolk write about the “feeling of superiority and gratifying self-esteem” felt by the established, and the feeling of inferiority felt by the outsiders (Van Stolk & Wouters, 1987); these feelings are the consequence of the imbalance of power between the two groups. I pose that urban men in Poland enjoy these feelings of superiority due to their position as the “winners” of the transformation, which places them higher on the proverbial totem pole.

There exists a hierarchy of masculinities, and urban, educated, heterosexual, Polish men are on the top of it; to them, attributes such as intelligence, worldliness, entrepreneurial spirit, and diligence which result in being able to support their families are being ascribed. Rural men, on the other hand, are given the status of underdogs. They are being paid less, and the professions in which they work, such as agriculture and construction, are seen as less demanding, reward-worthy, or prestigious than the white-collar professions of many urban men. This stems from the previously discussed inferior status of rurality and the rural population as a whole. It is, however, important to note that the context of the localization, of a place—rural or urban—is also significant in the way in which intra-gender relations play out.

4 THE ESTABLISHED AND THE OUTSIDERS: MASCULINITY IN POLAND

In the previous sections of the chapter, I have laid out its basic claim, which is that while tensions and power imbalances exist between two binary genders—men and women—there are also intra-gender tensions, within the large social group of “men” (and women as well). Within this group, power-imbalances are also present. Certain models, or performances of masculinity, are deemed more desirable, respectable, or simply better than others. The image of one group as superior to another is strengthened by what Elias and Scotson called blame-gossip; they note that gossip is not simply an individual phenomenon. In Winston Parva the gossip concerning the outsiders was deemed worthy of repeating when it reinforced the already existing image of the group. As such, gossip is tightly connected to communal rules (Elias & Scotson, 1994, p. 89). Blame-gossip does not exist without praise-gossip; information that reinforced the image of the established group as superior, usually spread by the members of said group. In the case of the rural–urban divide in Poland, the blame-gossip was spread in form of sensationalist stories of rural poverty in the popular media and political discourse to reinforce the image of the rural population as “losers of the transformation”. Especially rural men were subjected to blame-gossip that depicted them as “sub-par”, due to their inability to provide for their families, which was caused chiefly by structural unemployment, but is presented as a group-wide character flaw.

Sensationalist stories have a certain charm that is hard to resist; Elias and Scotson write that

(...) news items about some breach of the accepted norms committed by communally known persons were savored much more, that they provided more entertainment and more pleasurable satisfaction for tellers and recipients alike, than gossip about someone who deserved praise for upholding the accepted standards (...). (1994, p. 93)

This conclusion may explain the rise in sensationalist programming in Polish media depicting rural life, and rural people in consequence, in the least favourable light imaginable.

Due to historical conditions of the Polish society, associations with rurality, or rural origin, serve as a way of positioning an individual—or a group of individuals—as inferior. To rurality and rural population characteristics such as boorishness, lack of sophistication and over-simplicity are ascribed. The figure of a rural man in Poland is chiefly associated with agricultural work, farming. Farming, in turn, is a physical profession (although it is generally becoming less so; bigger farms operate more like businesses, with the owner assuming the role of a manager, rather than a hands-on worker), associated with physical strength and dirt. Research from Peter et al. (2006) points out that farmers themselves construe farming as a quintessential “man’s job”—dirty, physical, and dangerous, as opposed to white-collar jobs, which they see as less masculine. However, physical work is oftentimes devalued in neo-liberal societies, as evidenced, for example, by Walker and Roberts (2018), who have described how the neo-liberal turn of the 1990s and 2000s has affected the traditionally male sectors of the economy (mainly production). Other research, that is, by Barlett and Conger (2004) points to the connection between rural (farming) masculinities and traditional gender norms, which dictate the status of a man as head of a household, the breadwinner. This places an enormous burden on men to perform well financially; should they not meet societal expectations, their self-image of resiliency, strength, and responsibility may very well end up shattered. This self-image is also continuously threatened by the blame-gossip that deems physical labor less respectable than white-collar professions.

The feelings of “superiority and gratifying self-esteem” exhibited by the established group of urban men come from their *we*-image as the more entrepreneurial, intelligent, motivated and diligent individuals. The model

of hegemonic masculinity in Poland assigns to men the role of a provider (not necessarily of a sole provider, but a provider nonetheless) for their family; should the material standing of a family worsen due to unfavorable external factors, the blame is placed on the man, the head of the household. Therefore, rural men, the losers of transformation, are regarded as “second-category men” due to their perceived inability to successfully participate in the new conditions of market economy. This ability is required to uphold the ideal of the head of household, and a provider for the family.

4.1 *Urban and Rural Masculinities in Poland: Peasant Outsiders’ Political Movements after 1989*

The outsiders are not completely powerless. There are strategies that they undertake, which allow for fighting back against the established; sometimes by force (the bloody peasant uprising of 1847 in Southern Poland comes to mind), other times by political means (the formation of peasant political parties and associations in the interwar period) or cultural means (attempting to ridicule the established and create blame-gossip about them). This part of the chapter focuses on the contemporary political movements of rural men, which I interpret as an attempt to resist the hegemonic model of established, urban masculinity. I focus on the peasant political movements that—at least at their conception—can be characterized as outsiders’ movements. There is a still existing mainstream peasant party—Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (Polish Peasant Party), with traditions going back as far as the nineteenth century. At this point, however, the party is firmly established on the Polish political scene, and as such will be omitted from this analysis.

In 1992, merely three years after the fall of communism in 1989, a farmer from north-west Poland by the name of Andrzej Lepper formed a trade union of farmers called “Samoobrona Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej” (Polish for “Self-Defence of the Republic of Poland”). As a farmer, Lepper was disillusioned with Poland’s transition to market economy, which forced many farmers to apply for loans, which they then could not pay back, leading to the loss of farms. In 1992, Samoobrona became a political party. I interpret Samoobrona not merely as what it is presented as by its members (a party that served the interests of farmers first and foremost, and consequently the rural population as a whole) but also as a movement fighting for the recognition of rural masculinity as a model of “true”

masculinity. There were women politicians in Samoobrona, but they were a minority—among Samoobrona’s 25 founding members, only 6 were women. This low number was not an anomaly at this time; in 2001 women made up a quarter of elected Samoobrona’s MPs, and the proportion of female MPs in the left-wing Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (Democratic Left Alliance) was the exact same (for an analysis of Samoobrona—albeit not with a gendered lens—see Lang, 1999). This is, undoubtedly, a consequence of the gendered nature of both farming and politics, with both of the spheres designated as male-dominated, in Poland and in countries of the so-called western hemisphere (Gorlach & Drąg, 2011; Drąg & Gorlach, 2019; Ni Laoire, 2002, 2005; Stenbacka, 2017; Silvasti, 2003).

The case of Samoobrona is an illuminating example of how the outsiders—farmers, and rural men—may attempt to “break into” the sphere of official politics, thus far chiefly reserved for the established. Members of Samoobrona, especially the leader, Andrzej Lepper, had entered politics and the public sphere with a strategy to not try and mimic the dispositions of the established. Instead of adapting the language of sophistication and courtesy that is (or is supposed to be) the language of the political established and the intelligentsia, they spoke simply, loudly, and sometimes even loutishly. Public opinion at the time saw Samoobrona and Lepper as a danger; unwelcome strangers in a place reserved for those who had a sense of political *decorum* (restraint, “good manners”, etc.). The commentators and spectators of politics were even more shocked once Samoobrona became the third-largest party in the Polish lower house of parliament (Sejm), and entered the governing coalition with far-right, conservative party Liga Polskich Rodzin (League of Polish Families) and the currently ruling conservative party Prawo and Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice).

At that time, its members started to acquire dispositions similar to those of career politicians; famously, Lepper started attending the tanning salon, to tone down his reddish complexion (red face and hands are class signifiers; they designate a person who works physically, especially in the fields. For more discussion on the body as a class signifier, see, e.g., Skeggs, 1997), and started wearing more fashionable, well-tailored suits. However, discursively, Lepper and other members of the party drew stark lines between “them”—the established, the liberal establishment, “career politicians”, out of touch with “regular people”—and “us”—the truth-tellers, authentic, tough, resilient representatives of “regular people”. This populist approach was used to turn the seemingly disadvantaged status of the

outsiders into an asset. Thus, one can observe the way in which two groups, the established and outsiders, the urban politicians, and the rural activists/politicians, cast blame-gossip onto each other, to empower their claims of legitimacy to represent Polish voters. This approach resulted in very real power gains for Samoobrona, as it was a part of the right-wing coalition government between 2006 and 2007; Lepper served as a vice prime minister, before the breakdown of the Samoobrona—Liga Polskich Rodzin—Prawo i Sprawiedliwość coalition.

The era of Samoobrona ended in 2011 when Andrzej Lepper committed suicide. Official reports say that the cause was financial stress and the lack of political success after 2007 (see, e.g., Kącki, 2012). Since then, the role of the representatives of the outsiders was appropriated by the currently ruling party Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice), which, in a classic populist political strategy, used the us–them divide (“the people” versus “the elite”) to position themselves as being for “the people” (especially rural population). This lasted until 2018 when a new farmers’ movement called “Agrounia” (Agricultural Union) burst into the scene.

Agrounia’s leader, a farmer from central Poland called Michał Kołodziejczak, drew instant comparisons with Lepper due to the aesthetic of Agrounia’s protests (road blockades, occasional clashes with the police) and the form of his speeches (similarly unrestrained, simple, straightforward). Currently, Agrounia is vying for a status of a representative of the interests of Polish farmers, disenchanted by the current state of affairs.

In my view, what offended the political establishment and most commentators were not so much the political demands of Samoobrona and Agrounia, as much as the way in which these demands were manifested; the objections were in part due to the ‘aesthetics’ of the protests (por. Kubisa, 2016, p. 341). Loud protests, oftentimes disrupting the daily lives of urban inhabitants and resulting in clashes with the police; uninhabited, sometimes vulgar, and boorish speeches (especially by Lepper) were offending the sensitivities of those used to the politics as a sphere of certain upper and middle-class habitus. The preferred mode of protest by Samoobrona—road blockages—was also seen as a nuisance for other citizens. Twenty years later, Agrounia adapts some of these tactics. They organize road blockages, and in widely contested actions, spill apples and pig carcasses on the streets of Warsaw or bring live pigs to the protests, to the disdain of animal rights activists (Gzyra, 2021). They say these actions—while drastic—are framed as necessary for the “city slickers” and, most importantly, politicians—to take notice of farmers’ plight. The

criticism towards, for example, farmers' treatment of farm animals, is being treated as an expression of city people's naivete and overt sensibility, contrary to the farmers' toughness and knowledge of the intricacies of agricultural production. They occupy a position of defenders of the "common sense" and economic interests of the rural population, as well as experts in their own rights. The tensions between urban "idealists" who are concerned with animal welfare, and rural "tough realists" are high.

As I have previously mentioned, rural masculinity is not a respectable version of masculinity, due to deep-seated prejudice towards rural dwellers. The most dominant (not in a qualitative sense) habitus is the one of the urban middle class and intelligentsia, while the rural habitus is classified as 'less than'. The characteristics of respectable, hegemonic masculinity are white-collar jobs, university education and urban upbringing. In this light, both Lepper and Kołodziejczak seem alienated from the norm, as they both were brought up in rural areas, worked as farmers, and did not acquire university degrees. However, they both used their distance from the hegemonic version of political masculinity to their advantage. Lepper and Kołodziejczak subvert the image of hegemonic political masculinity, depicting it as corrupt, dishonest, and out of touch with reality, while creating their image as honest, hard-working and aware of the lives of the majority (and, especially, the rural population).

I believe that the farmers' political movements in Poland, such as Samoobrona and now Agrounia, are at least partly movements for elevating the standing of rural masculinity from its underdog status in the hierarchy of masculinities. The participation in these movements is an attempt to reverse the blame-gossip that the established (urban, higher-middle class men) cast on them, which depicts them as losers of the transformation, nuisances and obstacles on Poland's road to liberal democracy; the outsiders attempt to create praise-gossip about themselves, by associating rural masculinity with honesty, hard work and perseverance, while urban masculinity is subjected to blame-gossip that depicts it as dishonest, calculating, detached from the lives of "real people". The channels through which blame-gossip is cast on respective models of masculinities differ. While the established obviously have the advantage of having a platform in traditional, nationwide media (the newspapers, magazines, TV, and radio stations), the outsiders mobilize chiefly on the Internet (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube; some even post on TikTok, an application mostly used by teenagers and young adults), uploading the videos taken at their protests, reacting to government and political establishment's positions on

rural problems, etc. Through these channels, the representatives of the two models of masculinities compete with each other over the status of hegemonic masculinity.

4.2 *An Exercise in Blame-Gossip: Lepper in Popular Non-Fiction*

Andrzej Lepper's established contemporaries in the media (especially in the liberal media, such as leading Polish daily newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza*) were essential in casting the blame-gossip about Samoobrona's leader, and, in turn, rural population as a whole. Among the most commonly words used to describe Lepper were: *burak* (boor), *cham* (akin to redneck or hillbilly in American English) and *prostak* (simpleton). His words, especially the populist spirit of his speeches, were widely condemned as not suitable for a politician. The critique was not limited to the content and delivery of his words, but to his appearance as well (the liberal opinion-makers gleefully pointed out: the red tone of his skin, especially his face and hands; ill-fitting suits; badly cut hair). In the process of Lepper's ascendance in the ranks of the national political scene, he was persuaded to change his disposition to one that was more acceptable to the broad society. He started wearing better clothes, his skin became tan instead of red, and his hair was combed up—and it was all done by a single man, Lepper's political advisor, Piotr Tymochowicz, who later referred to his work with Samoobrona's leader as a "sociological experiment"—he wanted to see whether a politician he had invented "from the scratch" could be elected into the parliament. His attempts to turn a boor into a politician were documented by a liberal journalist Marcin Kački in his non-fiction book *Lepperiada* (2013), a *pièce de résistance* of established-made blame-gossip cast on Lepper, and, subsequently, his voters.

Lepperiada was brilliantly analyzed by Marcin Stachowicz (2018), who sees it as a crown example of Polish popular discourse on Lepper. Stachowicz writes that Kački's main narrative is that Lepper was a person akin to a liquid mass—without any moral spine, or set principles, but rather an opportunistic man, who could adopt any ideology, image, or narrative, should it benefit his goals. As such, Lepper's transition to a respected politician was seen as, first, disingenuous, and second, doomed. *Lepperiada*'s narrative was that of a certain essentialism—once a boor, always a boor, Kački is seemingly saying. An outsider's attempts to adopt the established's visual presentation cannot hide the fact that he remains a

representative of “worse” masculinity, of “the losers”, and as such his attempts to enter the political mainstream, the domain of the established, are both pitiful and offensive to the sensitivities of the established. Kącki writes that pre-transformation Lepper had “a bowl cut”, reminded him of “livestock”, and wore his hair with a “tragic fringe”. After-transformation Lepper, on the other hand, was described by Kącki as wearing “a wedding suit”, scuffed shoes, “a fringe that was made up only for the photo”. The attempts to civilize rural masculinity, therefore, are futile, as the country bumpkin will always be a country bumpkin, no matter the amount of spray tans and better clothes. Lepper therefore became a symbol; a class figure, a totem of rural masculinity. In Stachowicz’s view, which I share, *Lepperiada* is a “collection of aesthetic clichés, full of contempt towards the rural population, that the liberal intelligentsia has used—and continues to use—to create and uphold class distinctions” (Stachowicz, 2018, p. 4).

The intense blame-gossip that was cast on Lepper on the pages of *Lepperiada* has reflected—to a degree—common sentiments towards the rural population, especially rural men, as a whole. No amount of camouflage, the established are saying, can fool us into accepting the outsiders as a member of our in-group. The dynamic here is complex: the totem outsider, Lepper, has built his career (at least at the beginning) on anti-established sentiments, accusing them of falseness, artificiality, and displaying an egregious amount of contempt for those outside of their ingroup. The established, in turn, has cast a blame gossip on Lepper as an individual, which has then been extrapolated to rural men as a whole. Lepper’s ascendance into the ranks of national politics was preceded by his engaging in a form of mimicry—by changing his outward appearance to resemble the representatives of the established, which has consequently been ridiculed and incorporated into the existing blame gossip. The popular discourse included a particular essentialism—even after being elected into the parliament and taking the office of the vice prime minister, Lepper remained an outsider in the eyes of the established (career politicians and liberal opinion-makers).

One question comes to mind: Why was it impossible for Lepper to be accepted as a member of the established masculinity? He was, after all, a member of the parliament, a vice prime minister, and a leader of a sizable political party. Yet, his otherness remained apparent and continuously evoked in the popular, liberal discourse. Elias writes that the newcomers in Winston Parva attempted to make contact with the established residents, yet they were rejected. Why?

In that way they were made aware of the fact that the old residents perceived themselves as a closed group, to whom they referred as “we”, and the newcomers as a group of intruders, to whom they referred to as “they” and whom they meant to keep at a distance. If one tries to discover why they did so, one becomes aware of the decisive part that the time dimension, or in other words, the development of a group, plays as a determinant of its structure and characteristics. (Elias, 1994, p. xxxviii)

The rural population was historically marginalized, in that they were largely absent from the public sphere as its active creators. The creators of the public sphere, the intelligentsia, has closed its ranks to possible newcomers, especially those, who have been vocal about the established’s perceived shortcomings. In other words, Lepper could not be accepted as a member of the established masculinity due to his discursive style (especially in his early years), which was perceived as unbecoming, an example of rural men’s lack of refinement, intelligence and sense of *decorum*. All that he said, and all that he did, was therefore seen as an example of the outsiders’ perceived ill-character.

5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I set out to analyse intra-gender power differences, namely between two models of masculinity in contemporary Poland. The starting point was an acknowledgement of Raewyn Connell’s framework of hegemonic masculinity, which poses that there is no one universally accepted and adapted model of masculinity, but rather, a plethora of models, which are shaped by historical, economic and geographic factors. Within these models, there emerges one, that is hegemonic masculinity—a model of masculinity that allows those who abide by it to sustain domination over women and men who do not (or cannot) fulfil its’ expectations and assumptions as to how “a real man” should be like.

I believe that in post-1989 Poland hegemonic masculinity ideal is fulfilled by an urban, middle- or upper-middle class man, who is white, heterosexual, is in a committed relationship, works a white-collar occupation and espouses centrist political views. This is the set of dispositions that ensure that those who have them indeed enjoy societal power; when one looks at the make-up of Polish government and parliament, one can see, that political establishment in Poland is, indeed, chiefly made up of representatives of hegemonic masculinity. On the other hand, rural masculinity

is largely marginalized in decision-making bodies, as well as culturally, as the representations of rural masculinity are mainly unflattering (equating rural masculinity with alcoholism, backwardness, violence).

This marginalization stems from the long-term conditions of Polish society, and the history of rural–urban relationships. In the early days of Polish statehood, the economy was dependent on the system of serfdom, in which peasants were “assigned to the land” and ordered to work a certain amount of time for the benefit of the landlord, a member of the nobility. This state of the matters was in place until 1864, when the serfs were—at least legally—enfranchised. While the bourgeoisie has never been fully developed in Poland, the descendants of nobility joined the ranks of “intelligentsia”, largely urban social strata that enjoyed significant social, cultural, and material capital. In the inter-war period (1918–1939) the disparity between standards of living between rural and urban terrains was stark; the disappointment and disillusion felt by the peasants cumulated in 1937, during the peasant strike. After the Second World War, the marginalization of rural terrains can be explained by the logic of the Soviet-satellite governments, which believed that industrialization and urbanization were the way to modernization and prosperity, thus neglecting the development of agriculture and rural standards of living.

The transformation towards a market economy that started in 1989 has created two groups within Polish society—the winners and the losers of transformation. The winners were those, who were able to adapt to rapidly changing socioeconomic conditions (either through their possessed cultural, social, and material capital, their personal dispositions, or just by having the luck of being born in a major city), and losers those, who found the transition impossible to navigate. The difficulties in adapting to life in capitalist society were explained by personal shortcomings, and the existence of a syndrome of *homo sovieticus*, a soviet man, a person unable to take personal responsibility for their life.

The perception of rural populations as the losers was a dominant one in the 1990s, and it remains as such to this day. This is the demarcation line between the established and the outsiders. This framework, proposed by Norbert Elias and John Scotson, concerns itself with inter-group relations. The basic characteristic of established-outsiders relationship is that one group—the established—thinks of themselves as better than the other—the outsiders—and mobilizes certain explanations for this rationale. In the case herein analysed, the established—urban, upper—and middle-class men—use the perceived group failings of the outsiders—rural men—to

live up to the standards of “good masculinity”, which includes proficiency in navigating the capitalist, liberal society. In the process of group differentiation, the established use blame-gossip and praise-gossip, to uphold the cultural and material domination over the outsiders. Blame-gossip that depicts rural men as violent, vulgar, alcohol-prone, and unable to participate equally in market economy is present in the cultural representations and in parts of the political discourse.

However, the outsiders are not passively accepting their underdog status. I pose a supposition, that via participation in political farmers’ movements rural men not only defend the economic status of Polish farmers, but also attempt to elevate the status of rural masculinity, by depicting it as being honest, hard-working, and reasonable, as opposed to the conniving, sly and idealistic masculinity represented by the political establishment and urban, upper- and upper-middle-class men. The totem figure of this struggle, Andrzej Lepper, used anti-established rhetoric that catapulted his political career; however, his attempts to then assimilate into the respectable model of hegemonic masculinity proved futile, as the established have refused to accept a person who has—in their view—exemplified the whole set of faults culturally ascribed to rural population as one of their own.

In this chapter, I set out to describe the masculine rural–urban figuration as not simply a relationship of dominance from one side and passive reception of it from another, but rather as a push-and-pull relationship, fights fought for recognition, between the rural and urban men. This is, of course, a simplified description; due to constraints of text, I could not go deeper into the “shades of grey” between urban and rural masculinities. I did not, for example, include men from small towns, who exist in between these two worlds; I also could not discuss the role of women in farmers’ movements, which would make for a fascinating study of inter-gender alliances. Nonetheless, the study of intra-gender relations in the context of the fight for recognition remains a viable, rich, and underdeveloped field of research.

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Shifts in the Power Balance of Gender Groups in Western Germany 1945–2000

Jan-Peter Kunze

1 INTRODUCTION

At the start of the new millennium, there was a growing sense that a major change in gender relations had occurred. Frank Schirrmacher, editor of the conservative “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” national newspaper, found that German society faced a “twilight of men”¹ (“Männerdämmerung”), as women had taken over the “consciousness

This chapter is largely based on my publication “Das Geschlechterverhältnis als Machtprozess” (Kunze, 2005), which looks at gender relations from the vantage point of the start of the new millennium. The present chapter focuses on the same time frame and adds only a brief update of key arguments.

This chapter would not have been possible without the patience of Valerie Dahl and Stefanie Ernst as the German anthology editors and the help of Kelly Neudorfer, who proofread parts of the manuscript. My biggest thank-yous go to them.

¹ All quotes originally in German have been translated into English by the author.

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industry”, obtaining key positions in media ownership, print and TV journalism, and male power had passed its historical peak (Schirmacher, 2003). The ensuing public debate about Schirmacher’s diagnosis involved writers, intellectuals and feminists but did not arrive at any palpable results (Kunze, 2005, p. 14). However, this was symptomatic of the broader issue with grasping the phenomenon: Even those who could be expected to give a qualified answer, that is, the social sciences and especially feminist and gender studies, had focused on related aspects constitutive to their fields such as gender inequality (e.g., Gottschall, 2000, p. 12) or gender justice (e.g., Ostner, 2000) but with few exceptions,² did not offer a comprehensive and systematic approach to the core of the issue, that is, power, its dynamics, and possible power shifts. It became clear that many questions could not meaningfully be answered or even asked without an adequate conceptual and theoretical framework. These included questions such as the following: What do we mean by ‘power’? Have power relations between women and men changed in society at large, and if there has been a change, to what extent and in which areas? What were its drivers or impediments of change? Next, I will therefore outline the concepts and theory that make up the framework of this chapter. In addition to figurational theory and its operationalisation for the task, it is based on a quantitative medium-term analysis of mainly social-structural data covering the years 1945 to 2000. This period is split into the immediate post-war and the remaining period, with a corresponding shift of analytical focus, for methodological reasons. The aim of data analysis is to identify power-relevant processes in key areas and to eventually combine them into a multilevel, explanatory process model.

1.1 *Power and Related Concepts in Norbert Elias’ Thinking*

Elias’ concept of power helps overcome traditional limitations in sociology, for example by Max Weber (1978) or Niklas Luhmann (1988). As a “structural characteristic (...) of *all* human relationships”, power is “neither good nor bad” (2012b, p. 70) but can best be conceived of as a relation, ratio or differential. There is no constituent of a human relationship without power, so power is bipolar at least (2012b, p. 69). Power is the

²Notable exceptions were, for example, Ernst (1996), Klein and Liebsch (1997), and Treibel (2001).

necessary complement of functional human interdependence: “In so far as we are more dependent on others than they are on us ... they have power over us” (2012b, p. 88). Power differences vary along with degrees of interdependence, and this variance can be extreme (2012b, p. 69). To express the relational, gradual, fluid and at least bipolar character of power, Elias frequently uses the term “power balance” (e.g., 2012b, p. 126).

Human action, thinking, feeling and so on takes place within networks of human interdependence—or figurations, see below—that largely escape intentional human control and develop structures and structural changes beyond that control. Therefore, the *intentional use* of power is always predicated on and feeds back into non-intentional structures. For Elias’ power concept, this means that it is neutral with regard to intentionality (Bogner, 1989, p. 36).

1.2 *Figurations and Social Processes*

Elias’ concept of ‘figuration’ highlights the *structure* of human interdependence networks and can be fruitfully applied to gender relations (2012a, p. 525). Human interdependence is based both on biology and on humans performing specific social functions for one another in relationships on a broad spectrum from friendly to hostile (2012b, p. 72). The most important figurations are those that cater for security and survival—the “survival units” (2012b, p. 134). Figurations are found on different levels of social integration, such as families, cities, nations (2003a, p. 89, 2012b, p. 126) and even the figuration formed by nation-states (2012b, p. 158). As such, figurations usually form a multilevel, nested structure. Figurational levels interact and typically, some have more formative impact on other levels than vice versa.

Social processes are (changing) social structures in a diachronic perspective: “structured transformations of the figurations formed by humans, or of their aspects” (2003c, p. 270). They show a long-term bipolar directionality, that is, they go in either of two opposite directions for “usually no less than three generations” (2003c, p. 271). They are typically unplanned, and driven and directed by “power struggles” between groups (2003c, p. 275). They frequently move along in spurts associated with “decisive shifts of power” in favour of one of the competing groups. Power shifts show a characteristic pattern of tensions and conflict in which conflicts usually do not manifest themselves clearly in phases of great power inequality “but precisely where there begins to take place some

improvement in the position of less powerful groups” (1997, p. 359). A social process can have related, complementary processes (1997, p. 376) and be co-present with its counter-process (2003c, p. 273). If the latter becomes dominant, the process changes direction. Process models have a central theoretical role to play as sociological “means of explanation” (1983, p. 40, note 1).

2 POWER RESOURCES

Elias emphasises that while power resources are “polymorphous” (2012b, p. 88), they are not arbitrary, and methodology needs to identify the specific “principal resources of power available in a society” (Elias & Scotson, 2008, p. 7). The value that a power resource has for a group depends on the resource’s functional significance within the figuration (1987, p. 227).

2.1 *Habitus*

‘Habitus’ is “the group-specific pattern of affective-psychological self-regulation” (2003b, 447f) and tends to be “relatively durable” and to transform more slowly than structures on other figurational levels (1991, p. 214), which Elias refers to as the characteristic “drag effect” of the habitus (1991, p. 211; for an in-depth exploration especially of the ‘drag effect’, see Ernst et al., 2017). As Wilterdink argues, “habitus is not just an ‘effect’, but also a ‘cause’: maintaining and reinforcing the inequality by which it is shaped” (2017, p. 7), so it can be considered a power resource in its own right.

2.2 *Methodological Set-up: The ‘Resource Approach’*

After introducing Elias’ power and related concepts as the framework for exploring the research questions, these concepts will be operationalised by building on and repurposing a large body of existing research. There is an established approach in studies investigating power that links power to the analysis of social structure and that has been termed the “resource approach” of power studies. It postulates that power structures are reflected in a specific distribution of power-relevant ‘goods’, and that these ‘goods’ can be drawn from social-structural analysis, especially inequality research (Hradil, 1980, 93f).

Across the period of examination (except the immediate post-war period, see below), a fairly stable set of social-structural determinants of inequality emerges as a common denominator (Kunze, 2005, p. 70³). This set comprises the classic “meritocratic triad” (Kreckel, 1997, p. 97) of *education*, *profession* and *income*. If power structures are indeed reflected by the distribution of power-relevant ‘goods’ as purported by the resource approach, then these three variables can be assumed to represent a valid *core set* of indicators for the “chances of power and status” (Elias) during this period. For the purposes of this analysis, the *profession* category is interpreted more broadly as labour market participation and access, covering both vertical (i.e., hierarchical) and horizontal labour market positions (i.e., segregation or sectoral allocation of jobs). This conceptual broadening is mainly done for practical reasons, to be able to integrate the bulk of statistical data.

2.3 *Extending and Dynamising the Set of Power Resources*

Despite the support for the ‘resource approach’ described above, restricting our understanding of power to economics could mean confining power to its structural and positional aspect in a way that is both static and too narrow. To avoid this, the above ‘core set’ will be extended to include two additional types of status and power resources: One is the type that Gottschall alluded to when she remarked that “the shape of social inequality frequently only becomes clearer when traditional dimensions are combined with additional ones” (2000, p. 14). These “additional dimensions” will be drawn on as *ad hoc resources* (see Table 12.1) in their relevant empirical contexts. An example might illustrate this: The power resources of ‘physical strength’ and ‘dexterity’ played important roles as ‘body-centred’ qualifications determining the respective access of men and women to paid labour at some point. The decline in importance of these *ad hoc* resources will be attributed to a larger social process that extends throughout the study period and beyond, and while the process will be identified as such, empirical description of the trajectory of both power resources will be limited to phases of their marked decline. This approach to power resource identification as exemplified will be followed whenever

³ Here I offered an annotated synopsis of eight relevant studies, published between 1961 and 1996 (2005, p. 70).

Table 12.1 Core and extended set of power resources for operationalisation

A. Determinants of social-structural inequality ('meritocratic triad')	1. Labour 2. Education 3. Income
B. <i>Ad hoc</i> resources	For example, extra-functional labour qualifications, such as physical strength, dexterity
C. Group habitus	Patterns of psychological-affective self-regulation, e.g. empathy, willingness to learn

Note: Based on Kunze (2005, p. 82), with modifications

empirical context suggests it but *exclusively* so for the immediate post-war period for reasons discussed in the relevant section and its introductory section, "Analytical focus".

The second type of power resource extending the core set is the gender-specific *habitus* (see above). It proves particularly valuable as a concept when exploring what favoured, slowed down or even blocked advances in status and power positions.

A dynamised perspective on power resources not only implies that the measured power outcomes are expected to change but also that the measuring dimensions, that is, the power resources themselves, are considered as dynamic. This is due to their *dynamic functional value* over time. Thus, of the three dimensions of the 'meritocratic triad', the value of *paid labour* remained high and roughly constant as varying functions supported it. The main reason for its value constancy was that even under welfare state conditions and for most people, paid labour remained the only means to create more than a basic income and build up savings, especially for old age (Bonß, 2000, p. 338). It was also a primary means of status improvement (Beck, 1986, 138f). While the material functions of paid labour decreased, other functions increased as it became a vehicle for more non-material, subjective needs: as a means to increase one's life options, as a chance to apply one's skills (Baethge, 1991, p. 10) or as a source for a sense of belonging and self-worth (Beck, 1986, 220ff; Offe, 1984, p. 18).

Education was the most important status differentiator of the triad (Gottschall & Müller, 1986, p. 258), and it had that function for a significantly growing share of the population (Schäfers, 1995, p. 152). While at first it offered privileged access to higher (professional) statuses only to a small minority (Geißler, 1996, p. 40), it then became a prerequisite for

attaining most higher-status professional and social positions and most higher-paid jobs all for most of the labour force (e.g., Geißler, 1996, p. 259). After the initial stage as a facilitator of broad social advancement, it later also turned into a necessary safeguard against status and income *loss* (Beck, 1983, p. 45). As such, the importance of education grew sharply.

By contrast, *income* as a power resource shrank in importance, mainly due to the remarkable fivefold increase in real national income per capita (equalling purchasing power) over three generations (Miegel, 1983, p. 178) and the fact that a growing share of the average income, up to a fifth towards the end of the period, came from government transfers (including pensions) (Schäfers, 1995, p. 223).

To summarise, below is an overview of both the ‘core’ and the ‘extended’ set of social-structural dimensions and figurational aspects (*habitus*) that will be used to trace the shifting power balance of women and men as groups:

Patterns of intentional interaction and of valuation of self and others will not be treated as power resources but will be used to illustrate the changing power balance by indicating specific phases and shifts.

3 ANALYTICAL FOCUS

Analytical focus has so far been on the market, labour and public spheres as the principal arenas of social competition. This changed for a short period after 1945, when dominant processes shifted, and gender power relations were mainly shaped in the former ‘private’ and ‘family sphere’ that now emerged as a new and specific figuration.

3.1 *The Immediate Post-War Period*

This period in western Germany, lasting from the breakdown of the “Third Reich” in May 1945 to roughly 1948/49, aptly illustrates the explanatory usefulness of the multilevel concepts of figuration and of social processes. It shows that events on specific figurational levels, that is, that of conflicting nation-states and, one level below, within one state where central political power disintegrated, predominantly shaped what happened on lower levels, not least in the area of gender relations. From a process perspective, events of this period can be broadly subsumed under two high-level processes: disintegration and de-differentiation. These were

counter-processes that now became dominant, one over the long-standing process of integration of humans into an ascending order of “units of survival” (Elias, 2003c, p. 275) and the other over the secular process of differentiation that, for example, had brought about the division of labour or the separation into societal spheres of production and consumption.

Apart from the political turmoil, *physical* disintegration on the macro- or societal level was massive: A 90% damage rate of transport connections hampered especially long-distance mobility, for example between cities (Loth, 1983, p. 25; Burghardt, 1989, p. 251), and 45% of homes destroyed or made unusable left nearly half the population homeless (Schubert, 1984, p. 234). Homelessness was compounded by the 9.25 million refugees and expellees from (former) eastern Germany. Homeless persons were voluntarily accepted or forcibly allocated by the authorities into existing households (Korte, 1989, p. 14).

On the meso or institutional level, de-differentiation blurred the line between the labour market and production on the one hand and private lives on the other as functions of production and distribution, value creation and conservation, moved into what ceased to be a distinct ‘private sphere’ and now accommodated market functions that were crucial for survival. Official market distribution significantly deteriorated as vital goods like food, clothing and heating material were allocated through the government rationing system or went through black market or private channels (Eschenburg, 1983, p. 63, 267, 385) such that these accounted for an estimated 10% to 80% of circulating goods (Wildt, 1986, p. 127). With official prices and wages government-controlled, inflation in the unofficial sector rose and the function of money as a means of exchange was greatly diminished. Money was replaced by “in-kind” currencies, or goods were bartered directly (Heisterhagen & Hoffmann, 2003, pp. 206–207). Regarding family structures, disintegration and de-differentiation affected the heterosexual ‘nuclear family’ consisting of a man, a woman and their child(ren) in two ways. One was by the absence of men: Peaking in 1945 and 1946, war casualties and prolonged war captivity created a demographic gap of approximately ten million men who were missing from the families. The gender ratio was particularly skewed in big cities: for example, in Berlin in 1945, 63.2% of the residents were women and only 36.8% men (Meyer & Schulze, 1989, p. 400). De-differentiation of family structures meant that distant relatives beyond the ‘nuclear family’ and non-relatives were admitted into households (see above).

3.1.1 *Extended Household Economies and Cross-Household Networks as Survival Units*

The figuration that now emerged in the (former) ‘private’ or ‘family’ sphere bore a striking resemblance to the ‘family economy’ in pre-industrial Europe and North America. This family type involved both women and men, more than two generations, and relatives as well as non-relatives living in one household and contributing to its economic activity (Becker-Schmidt, 1987, p. 8). Gendered division of labour existed but was organised pragmatically along the dimension of required proximity to the living-place, with men working at a greater distance and women closer to or at the place itself, especially during phases of late pregnancy and care work (e.g., infant feeding), both frequent occurrences. This pattern was more marked in rural than in urban settings. Low productivity and scarce resources meant that alongside production, value *conservation*, for example, food conservation, often falling into women’s responsibility, was an important and highly valued economic activity (Baur et al., 2019, pp. 108–110, 113; Hofmeister, 2019, p. 86). These pre-industrial structural features largely reappeared in the post-war figuration of extended household economies. Major differences between two types were, besides a smaller significance of biological reproduction and related care work in the newer type, that notably, men were mostly absent from it. This type was female-centred, and its composition could be as broad and varied as, for example, “(single) women, children, parents, grand-parents or parents-in-law, sisters or sisters-in-law, aunts or female cousins, female neighbours or friends” (Meyer & Schulze, 1989, p. 256). Also, the post-war households saw an even stronger focus on reproductive (vis-à-vis productive) activities and especially on strategies of *coping with scarcity*—which was the prevailing condition as food rations were grossly insufficient and covered only about a third of physiological requirements (Mirow, 1996, p. 971). Typical scarcity coping strategies included repairing and repurposing items (Thurnwald, 1948, p. 18, 58; Schubert, 1984, p. 46; Meyer & Schulze, 1989, p. 235), conserving items or substituting unavailable items (e.g., coffee, detergent) by similar, available ones (Thurnwald, 1948, p. 49; Schubert, 1984, p. 157; Wildt, 1986, 85ff; Meyer & Schulze, 1989, p. 236), and carefully calculating both the distribution of supplies among household members and supply consumption over time (Thurnwald, 1948, p. 195; Meyer & Schulze, 1989, pp. 246–248).

The larger networks of relationships that interconnected these households had frequently already been formed during the war. The networks

were used for mutual material support and for co-operation in the procurement of vital goods. They were also important for the emotional cohesion among their members (Meyer & Schulze, 1989, 254ff) and for them, represented an additional source of power (Meyer & Schulze, 1989, 302f).

3.1.2 *Crucial Power Resources in Female Hands, Shifting Balance of Power*

Not only the last aspect but all the circumstances mentioned so far played into the hands of women. To the extent that men were absent from families, there was no competing male authority for the children. Women were predominantly better equipped for coping with scarcity, having usually acquired household skills during female socialisation—women were the “trained reproductive workers” (Schubert, 1984, p. 65, 35)—and especially the older generation was still familiar with repair and substitution techniques practised during and after World War I and the world economic crisis (Meyer & Schulze, 1989, p. 265). In another parallel to the pre-industrial ‘family economy’, the work contribution of women now also had a direct and visible effect on the economic performance of the household and was acknowledged as such—see, for example, the account a woman in Baumert and Hünninger gives of her return from a foraging trip to the countryside:

When I came home and unpacked my basket and first a pound of butter, then eggs and finally some bacon made their appearance, I was prouder than ever before. My whole family admired me and there was no one more important than me in the house. Things had never been like this before the war! (1954, p. 4)

Women occupied the central positions of competence and skill in extended households on which other household members depended to a greater extent. Men, though, did continue to work in market-based, paid jobs as far as these were available, but pay was far from ensuring a livelihood for their families. According to the records of household budgets kept by the families in Thurnwald’s comprehensive study undertaken in 1947, not even one-third of the families’ expenses could be covered by paid labour (1948, pp. 67–71).

Generally, men returning home from war or war captivity found it difficult to negotiate their way in everyday situations, being unfamiliar with

the voucher system for food and other essential goods, with the black market and, by and large, the entire complex of ‘survival work’ (Meyer & Schulze, 1984, p. 359, 361f). As husbands they had often been estranged from their wives and as fathers from their—especially small—children. Older children now frequently paid them less or no respect at all (Meyer & Schulze, 1984, pp. 373–378). Thurnwald summarises the decline of male power as follows:

Barring exceptional cases it is the mothers who wear the pants around the house. The fathers’ role has become almost ridiculously small ... Only in two of my families has the man taken the lead again. This is the men’s fault who, at home, content themselves with ‘hauling stuff in’ and sleeping (unless their time is taken up by a paid job). (1948, p. 199)

3.1.3 *Valuation of Self and Others and the Returning Soldier’s Conflict*

Also in Thurnwald’s sample of family reports, the author found instances, especially in young women, of “an overly ostentatious attitude of independence” and even of “general disdain for men as family fathers” (1948, pp. 197–199). A similarly scornful tone and attitude, historically unprecedented, was reflected in a number of articles that appeared in a high-circulation magazine, *Constanze*, launched in 1948 (Seeler, 1984, p. 95), with headlines like “Men as a burden” (von Holländer, 1948, p. 7, cited in Schubert, 1984, p. 57) and “Re-marriage not desired” (von Holländer, cited in Vogel, 1989, p. 38).

How the power balance between women and men had shifted, driven by figurational forces beyond their control, and how each of the groups responded to this shift in a way that gave rise to a specific conflict but also prevented its escalation and a further progress of the power shift, is made visible by what has been called the “returning soldier’s conflict”, or “Heimkehrerkonflikt”, as if under a magnifying glass.

The men who returned home usually wanted their former dominant position restored. The women, however, were not prepared to easily give up their considerable gain in independence and decision-making authority, nor were they ready to do without men making an increased contribution to domestic and subsistence work (Meyer & Schulze, 1989, 268f). When it came to this and other issues, men mostly put up resistance to what they saw as another humiliating experience, and became “extremely difficult” to deal with for the other household members (Schubert, 1984,

p. 56). The situation was rife with tension and conflict. Divorces soared to more than 83,000 cases, a number not attained again until 1972 (Statistisches Bundesamt (destatis) (n.d.-a) Ehescheidungen).

However, many observers note that women did not push this conflict as far as they might have been expected, and in fact many women went to great lengths to spare the man the full realisation of his desolate situation (e.g., von Holländer, cited in Schubert, 1984, p. 57). Apparently traditional elements of female self-conception such as care and empathy for the weak, together with a tendency to prioritise the stability, cohesion and solidarity of the family as the basis for their own well-being, held them back (Meyer & Schulze, 1989, p. 287). Specifically from an Eliasian perspective, it was probably the figurational ideal of ‘harmonious inequality’ in marriages (van Stolk & Wouters, 1987, 136f) that also formed part of the self-image and psychological make-up—or habitus—of women that caused them to not only fight against the man but also “to struggle with the male-dominated self-image within themselves” (Elias, 2009, p. 275). This constituted a red line they were not willing or able to cross.

During 1948 and 1949 and with the re-establishment of higher-level processes like integration (reinstatement of a central government) and differentiation (e.g., into distinct production and consumption spheres) as well as of institutions like money, the previous figurational forces came back in place and now also made the power balance between men and women swing back to a more unequal state once again.

3.2 *Empirical Shifts in Positions from 1950 until 2000*

The social-structural dimensions that were chosen above to represent the basis and core of power positions showed the following shifts from the 1950s until around 2000.

3.2.1 *Positional Shifts in Education and Training*

Between 1967 and 1994, the rate of female *early leavers* from *Hauptschule* (secondary general school) stayed below their male counterparts’ rate and dropped from 44.3% to 37.4% (BMBF, 1998, p. 86; 1994 for former West German territory). Females generally earned an increasing number of secondary school qualifications and surpassed males in all school types such as *Hauptschule* (BMBF, 1998, p. 86), *Realschule* (intermediate school) (Müller & Haun, 1994, p. 89) and *Gymnasium* (grammar school) (BMBF, 1998, p. 86; former West German territory). Here the general trend was

the most marked, with *Abitur* certificates for women more than doubling from 25% in 1950 (Pross, 1969, p. 19) to 57% in 1997 (BMBF, 1998, p. 86; for Germany).

The share of female graduations in *tertiary education* showed lower levels but partly even steeper increases. Thus, between 1952 and 1999, the proportion of women graduating from public universities (excl. teacher training colleges) compared to men almost tripled from 15% to 43%, and female doctoral degrees nearly doubled from 17% to 32% (for 1952: Statistisches Bundesamt, 1952, p. 4, 14, 24, former West German territory; for 1999: Statistisches Bundesamt 1999, p. 16, Germany, own calculations).

Table 12.2 shows the gendered development of *horizontal* positions in tertiary education. The representative metric used was the proportion of *women who earned university degrees* in the six largest subject groups compared to men (read size from left to right, top to bottom).

It shows that despite the strong influx of women into all areas, traditional female focus areas attracted even more women and thus the high level of polarisation between domains of high and low female representation, that is, especially the two areas in the rightmost column versus the engineering sciences, remained stable. The most dynamic contrasting shift, however, occurred with the biggest single increase in the largest subject group, that is, in law, economics and social sciences. This shift

Table 12.2 Share of women in university degrees for the six largest subject groups, 1973 and 1999

<i>Law, economics, social sciences^a</i>		<i>Engineering sciences^b</i>		<i>Languages and cultural studies^c</i>	
1973	18.7%	1973	3.0%	1973	52.4%
1999	44.0%	1999	17.3%	1999	70.9%
<i>Mathematics, natural sciences^d</i>		<i>Human medicine^e</i>		<i>Art, art studies^f</i>	
1973	32.4%	1973	23.6%	1973	54.6%
1999	35.5%	1999	45.4%	1999	62.8%

Note: Percentages are own calculations; 1973 former West German territory, 1999 Germany

^aStatistisches Bundesamt (1999, p. 37)

^bStatistisches Bundesamt (1999, p. 69)

^cStatistisches Bundesamt (1999, p. 17)

^dStatistisches Bundesamt (1999, p. 48)

^eStatistisches Bundesamt (1999, p. 58)

^fStatistisches Bundesamt (1999, p. 79)

established a new strong ‘middle ground’ for women between the traditional poles of gendered subject areas. It also constituted a historical novelty compared to earlier female subject preferences which in the 1960s had centred on human medicine, elementary school teaching, German philology and modern languages (Helwig, 1974, p. 68).

In *vocational training*, both gender groups tended to concentrate their choices in specific female- or male-gendered vocational jobs. The jobs favoured by girls were characterised by a female “distance to technology” (Sommerkorn, 1993, p. 45) and were typically lower-skilled and less well-paid (Engelbrech & Kraft, 1992, p. 17; Engelbrech, 1996, p. 142) and offered lower horizontal and vertical mobility (Engelbrech, 1987, p. 69; Engelbrech & Kraft, 1992, p. 17). The *level of concentration* of both genders in their gendered set of vocational jobs was persistently higher for girls than for boys but the gap between the gender groups’ levels of concentration narrowed considerably: From 1963, when the girls’ choices were about three times more limited than the boys’ (Pross, 1969, p. 24; own calculation), that ratio dropped to about 6:5 in 1997 (BMBF, 1998, 120f; own calculation).

A gendered habitus acted in different directions in each area: While in general education girls’ “pronounced willingness to learn” (Gottschall, 1990, 139f) facilitated their educational advance, female “technology distance” and the corresponding male affinity stabilised initial vocational choices overall—and slowed down change in horizontal occupational segregation (see below).

3.2.2 *Positional Shifts on the Labour Market*

With regard to labour, first *fundamental* access will be discussed, followed by aspects of *horizontal* and *vertical* positioning.

While male labour participation decreased at the low and high ends of age distribution, female participation increased significantly from ages 25–30 to 55–60 (for the following, see Figs. 12.1 and 12.2), making the two patterns remarkably similar. Specifically, the female participation curve transformed from a first sharp and then steady decline after ages 20–35 in 1958 to later follow, with a distinct margin in the middle-age groups—the typical family phase—the broad arch-shaped curve of male participation in 1999.

As much as 83% of the increase observable for women originated from part-time jobs (Kohler & Spitznagel, 1995, p. 354, own calculation).

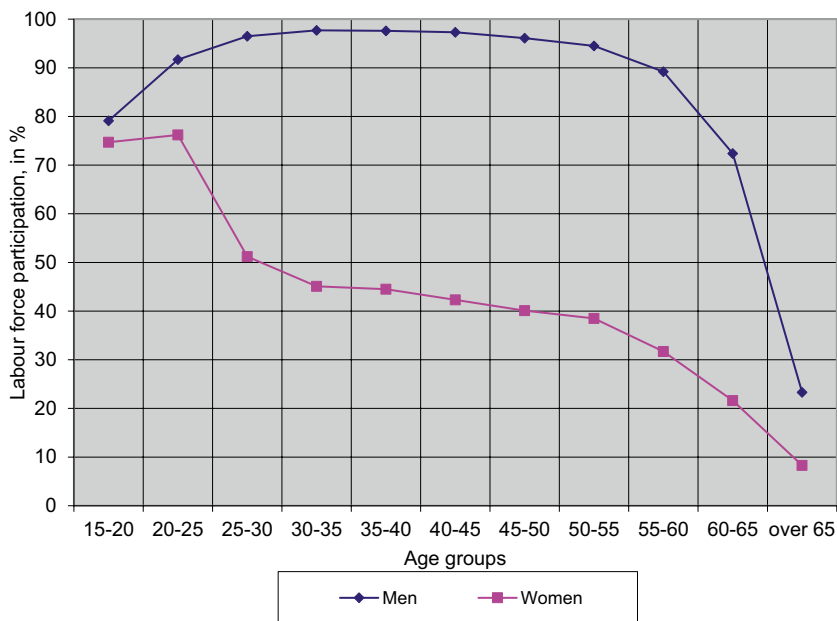


Fig. 12.1 Labour force participation for men and women by age group in western Germany, in 1958. (Source: Statistisches Bundesamt, [n.d.](#), Mikrozensus, 1957–2019 (work table))

Most part-time work has a number of disadvantages including low upward and horizontal mobility (Hadler & Domsch, 1994, p. 13); the low-skilled sector of part-time jobs usually does not secure individual livelihood or afford sufficient provision in old age (Quack, 1994, p. 35; Holst & Schupp, 1996, p. 468). The background to these disadvantages is that the majority of part-time jobs are located within specific service occupations with a high proportion of women (Lauterbach, 1994, p. 180). A notable exception to this disadvantageous pattern are part-time jobs in the public sector which consistently contradict these negative characteristics (Quack, 1994, p. 35; Holst & Schupp, 1990, p. 407).

The attractiveness of all types of part-time work especially for working mothers lies in its function as a “bridge” (Lauterbach, 1994, p. 199) that facilitates employment continuity between phases of full-time employment.

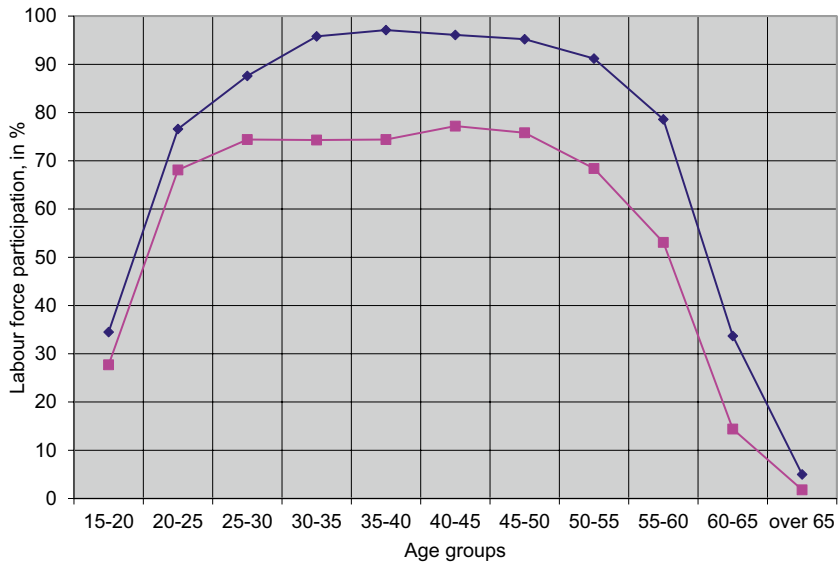


Fig. 12.2 Labour force participation for men and women by age group in western Germany*, in 1999. (Source: Statistisches Bundesamt, Mikrozensus, 1957–2019 (work table); *Note: Former territory of the Federal Republic of Germany)

Thus, for employed and partnered women part-time work is the main path towards the “modernised breadwinner marriage”, a term used by Pfau-Effinger and Geißler for a marriage model with a primary and a secondary provider of income (1992, p. 367). This marriage type also reflects the (typically female) “double socialisation”, that is, the fact that women, more so than men, are expected and want to engage in both family life, especially child raising, and the labour sphere, and need to reconcile the contradictory demands of both spheres in themselves and within their life-course (Becker-Schmidt, 1987), which they mostly do by opting, in heterosexual partnerships, for the secondary provider role. This model more frequently involves higher dependency of a female on a male partner than vice versa, and it had become the prevailing partnership orientation for women in the 1990s (Pfau-Effinger & Geissler, 1992, p. 367).

Putting this transformation of participatory patterns in demographic terms, the dominant demographic type of a working woman that was

young, unmarried, working full-time and childless in the 1950s had become middle-aged, married, part-time employed and a mother four decades later (gaining dominance already in the 1980s, Willms-Herget, 1985, p. 277; Rabe-Kleberg, 1987, p. 54).

Looking at *time as a secondary power resource*, it will be explored where the extra *daily time* for increased female labour participation came from. Two elements that contributed roughly equal amounts of daily time were the reduction of weekly working hours for full-time employees that made 1.4 hours of extra time available daily (Voß, 1993, p. 94), and part-time work that brought even greater work time reduction but also increased women's household and family workload. Only a small time contribution originated from a more balanced sharing of domestic work (Holst & Schupp, 1990, p. 407). This was confirmed for the last decade of the examined period by Geist who, in addition, found a quantitatively important "circular" mechanism where more highly paid female labour freed up time for itself, that is, it strengthened partnered women's bargaining position and allowed them to reduce domestic work in proportion to their relative contribution to household income, although resulting time savings occurred mainly *within* the female housework input and were achieved through, e. g., outsourcing housework or buying time-saving appliances (2007, p. 12, 13 (footnote), 20). The relative stability, in comparison, of the male housework input remaining on a lower level is explained by Grunow and Baur by gender-conservative views, held even more strongly by women than by men, on the central role that paid labour has in life for men (2014, p. 541). Another major time factor enabling labour participation of women were changes over their *lifetime*, that is, life-course changes that significantly increased the proportion of female employment at the expense of family time (Peuckert, 1999, p. 109). Available lifetime came from different sources: more women not having children at all, postponed marriage and/or postponed start of a family, the combination of part-time (or full-time) paid labour with family work and a more frequent return to full-time employment after a family phase (Rabe-Kleberg, 1987, p. 60; Holst & Schupp, 1990, p. 400).

Gendered access to labour market positions in a *horizontal* dimension linked to differential opportunities is set in the context of the sectoral structure of occupations. Firstly, this was characterised by sectoral structural change (Piekenbrock, 2009, p. 390) and especially tertiarisation, that is, the fact that the tertiary sector has grown faster than the primary and secondary sectors and, in Germany, became dominant in the 1970s

(Peneder et al., 2001, p. 18). Women participated in tertiarisation disproportionately, that is, they moved from the first and second into the tertiary sector in greater numbers than men, who were concentrated in the secondary sector (Blossfeld, 1986, p. 304). The unequal sectoral distribution of genders meant that the groups experienced the advantages and disadvantages of sectors, and their overall dynamics, in different ways. Men, due to their stronger presence in the secondary sector, generally enjoyed higher wages and chances of vertical mobility, while working mothers profited more from the greater availability of part-time jobs in the tertiary sector—with their associated drawbacks—and women on the whole from the general dominant expansion of tertiary jobs and, from 1995 onwards, the lower risk of registered unemployment (IDW, 2000, table 23; Winkel, 1995, p. 41). Against the backdrop of these mixed developments, the question of status and power advancement for a gender group is inconclusive as it depends on additional assumptions that cannot be explicated here. A similar inconclusiveness as stated for *sectoral* distribution is true for the level of occupations, that is, the segregation of the job market into ‘typically’ male and female jobs. This ‘gendering’ of occupations even deepened over time; for example the retail and education subsectors became more ‘feminised’ (Willms-Herget, 1985, 265f). If overall occupational segregation remained high but slightly diminished as it did, this was only due to the expansion of more modern types of occupations within the service (tertiary) sector with a more mixed-gender composition whose growth overcompensated the intensified gendering of ‘classical’ service jobs (Willms-Herget, 1985, p. 228; Lehner, 1997, 93f).

An issue related to that of sectoral occupational segregation is the decline in significance of secondary power resources that could be called *body-centred gendered qualifications*. These included ‘occupational virtues’ like dexterity in women (Becker-Schmidt, 1983, p. 252) and especially physical strength in men. Acquired and gendered bodily strength or skills as labour market resources lost ground to resources more loosely linked to the body: knowledge and intellectual skills (see below) and the ability to use affective and emotional self-control for work performance (Ernst, 2019, p. 67). In this wider context, what may be provisionally called the ‘de-corporation’ of power resources is part of the transformation of the entire field of relevant power resources and represents a long-term process. Its highlights in the period at hand were a massive spurt of devaluation of physical strength in the 1950s with mechanisation (also) of male-gendered labour in the secondary sector (Kehl, 1989, p. 308) until

this resource had lost most of its former significance in the 1990s (Engelbrech & Kraft, 1992, p. 18). Body-centred female “occupational virtues” largely became redundant during mechanisation waves in the secondary sector in the 1970s and the 1980s, leading to the outflow of women there (Engelbrech, 1987, p. 65) and another wave involving microelectronics in the tertiary sector in the 1980s that caused wide-scale losses of low-skilled jobs among women (Gottschall & Müller, 1986, p. 268, 273), where job losses were outweighed by the growth of other tertiary, female-gendered sub-sectors (see above). Thus, ‘de-corporisation’ meant that a formerly major horizontal segregation mechanism for gendered occupations receded from a prominent position into the background. The associated net power loss seems to be on the male side, with men—not women—also losing most of an important source of work-related pride and prestige (for the example of miners see Hille, 1950, cited in Kehl, 1989, p. 289).

As an internal shift within the tertiary sector, Peneder et al. describe the ascent of “knowledge-based services”, that is, a type of services that focuses on knowledge application and comprises “communications, financial services, real estate and business services”, which the authors demonstrate to be the main growth driver of this sector (2001, p. 8, 10). Knowledge-based services also form the categorial bracket for the most dynamic segment of female occupations, the “semi-professions, teaching and childcare professions and office professions” whose profile of opportunities stands in stark positive contrast to most of the more traditional types of female tertiary occupations (Lauterbach, 1994, p. 252). In addition, in the 1990s chances had improved for women to access positions with an attractive profile especially “in the communications and media sector” (Hornung, 2000, p. 11) where being female was sometimes even seen as an advantage (Wunderer & Dick, 1997, p. 12).

With regard to formal *vertical* positions, the shift in gendered employment was marked. Earlier, an overwhelming majority of women used to work at the lowest hierarchy level: In 1968, 94% of female workers were unskilled or semi-skilled. Only 6% were skilled workers, compared to 47% and 53% of men in the same categories (Nave-Herz, 1972, p. 119). By contrast, women had predominantly moved into the third of four rank levels as defined by official micro-census survey categories by the year 2000, outnumbering men there by 6:5 (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2001, p. 23; for the relation, see Kunze, 2005, p. 209).

3.2.3 *Positional Shifts in Income*

With women's moderate advance in the job hierarchy, their incomes rose to what represented a strong share in the middle-income range, so there was a clear narrowing but no closing of the income gap between the gender groups. For women working full time as *salaried employees*, the difference to men's income in that category was 45% in 1957 and dropped to 29% by 2001. In a parallel shift on a slightly lower level, the same gap between female and male *workers* decreased from 43% in 1957 to 26% in 2001 (Frank-Bosch, 2002, p. 398). This narrowing process seemed to continue beyond that period, given that younger women from both labour categories and up to the age of 30 had reduced the gender income difference to 20% in the 1990s (Mayer, 2001, p. 456).

4 INTERMEDIATE SUMMARY

Within the scope of this chapter, only a brief outline of power and status changes could be given. It nevertheless allows to summarise the transformations as follows: Women moved from marginal into *predominantly middle positions*: of labour participation, sectoral dynamics, occupational structures, hierarchy and income positions, all mainly grounded in superior educational achievement. If these positional shifts were to be condensed into a social figure embodying the highest-profile shifts, that figure would be a young woman in her 20s or early 30s who had graduated in a university subject from within the largest subject group, had no children or one child, and worked in a knowledge-based service occupation not at a top, but at an elevated hierarchy position for a corresponding income. An even more high-profile and visible outcome of change, though in a limited area, is the rise of women in "knowledge-based services" jobs, especially in the "communications and media sector" (Hornung, 2000, p. 11), which prompted the "twilight of men" debate. In general terms of power, there has been a clear shift of the power balance benefitting women but no decisive change that would have tipped or reversed the balance.

5 SOCIAL PROCESSES AS THE EXPLANATORY LEVEL

The status and power shifts outlined above were structural features of, and predominantly determined by, *social processes* that shaped these shifts with respect to their non-intentional momentum, structure, direction and limits. Usually, each of these underlying processes affected more than just one

shift and moreover, the processes appeared to be interrelated in specific ways. Below I will therefore try to show the *interrelations and structure* of a set, or ‘bundle’, of processes. First, however, the individual processes will be discussed.

The process with the largest scope can be characterised as *decreasing dependence on nature* and increasing dependence on the social level of existence. As a long-standing historical trend, it was most evident here in the reduction of the family phase and decreasing number of children in the female life-course. Elias has pointed out that among human groups, women and men are uniquely interdependent *biologically* (2009, p. 272), so these life-course changes implied that the ‘interface’ of relationships where this interdependence plays out became smaller. Decreasing dependence on nature is also a mark of intersectoral structural change and, specifically, of *women’s* stronger exodus from the primary and secondary into the tertiary sector.

Value and quality transformations in the set of power resources, especially of education. The rising value of education to the rank of the single most potent power resource had its institutional parallel in the historically unprecedented expansion of the German education system in the 1950s and the 1960s (Anweiler et al., 1992, p. 23). This policy sought to tap into the “talent reserves” (Gukenbiehl, 2001, p. 91) of several population groups, of which women were only one but benefitted the most (Sommerkorn, 1993, p. 38). The *quality* transformation associated with this value rise is that knowledge as a resource transmitted through education had reached a point where it *needed to be distributed more widely* in order to function effectively, or put differently, when its inherent quality of being more difficult to monopolise, as Elias claims is true of all “secular” or “scientific” knowledge, made itself felt more strongly than before (1984, p. 262, 278). Another instance of value transformation of a power resource closely related to education is the decline in significance of ‘body-centred’ resources described above.

Expanded education for women also brought about significant “gains in reflexivity and status” in the younger generation (Gottschall, 2000, p. 274). In the wider arena of public debate and on the institutional level of science, these gains led to the accumulation of a ‘critical mass’ of (primarily) women who could now articulate the problems of the unequal power balance with a strong enough ‘voice’ to allow the hidden tensions and conflicts between the gender groups to erupt openly in society at large.

Women covered a longer stretch along the path of *individualisation through education* in the investigated period as they started from lower baseline educational achievements. Their advance however, as that of men, was mediated through class structure (based on the Goldhorpe class schema) favouring bourgeois classes, according to a cohort analysis extending until the end of the 1980s (Müller & Haun, 1994, pp. 18–19). For young working-class women also, specific *habitus-related factors*, such as self-perception as a social misfit and as lacking articulatedness in higher education institutions, fed into decisions against higher secondary or tertiary education paths in addition to socio-economic factors (Rohleder, 1997; Brendel, 1998, p. 260). Women also gradually *detached themselves from family bonds* in their role as mothers more than men did from their role, and entered into *labour market relationships*, particularly through part-time jobs. The latter set of choices is shaped by professional status such that mothers with lower-status jobs tend to take a longer time of legal parental leave from their jobs and more often re-enter the labour market after a homemaking phase on more unfavourable conditions and more frequently for part-time jobs than women with higher-status jobs do (Gottschall & Bird, 2003, p. 130). Both individualisation advances of women, through education and market-based labour, were aided by *increased government activity*, notably the expansion of secondary and tertiary education and of early childcare provision (Pfau-Effinger & Geißler, 1992, p. 361).

6 THE PROCESS ‘BUNDLE’: STRUCTURE AND INTERRELATIONS

The above processes appear so closely interrelated that it seems promising to model them as a ‘*bundle*’ of processes, that is, as imaginary lines representing evolving aspects of the gender groups’ figuration, and with the power balance and habitus processes as central lines connecting to all others. Considering the interrelations themselves, the following are worth noting:

- *Intertwinement.* Some processes were found to be so closely related as to almost suggest a fixed nexus, for example value increase of education and individualisation, or de-differentiation and disintegration.

- *Process conjunctures.* Processes coincided to reinforce each other, or with negative power effects, such as in the value increase of education plus female “willingness to learn” plus tertiarisation/emergence of knowledge-based services or, put negatively: de-differentiation of private and labour sphere combined with male habitus.
- *Slowdown effects.* As observable, for example, in the slowing down of female power advances by both genders’ ‘conservative’ habitus regarding horizontal occupational segregation.
- *Reversibility of processes, figuration of states as the decisive figurational level.* Evidenced by the events in the immediate post-war period.

7 PERSPECTIVES

While a full update continuing this analysis into the present is not feasible, a few key points will be re-examined. These confirm important previous findings such as the nexus of female habitus and education, the trend of female and male employment patterns becoming more similar, and the direction and (slow) speed in the transformation of occupational segregation.

Higher general education achievements of girls and their better habitus fit vis-à-vis the general requirements of school learning *persist* (Hannover & Ollrogge, 2021). *Female labour participation* has continued to increase and male and female age profiles of labour participation have become closer over the last two decades (Statistisches Bundesamt (destatis) (n.d.-b) Erwerbstätigenquoten 1991 bis 2021). *Horizontal occupational segregation* has remained largely stable in its highly segregated segments and is only declining slightly due to the relative expansion of occupations with a mixed gender proportion (Hausmann & Kleinert, 2014, p. 4), as observed before. A recent finding that underpins a theoretical assumption rather than providing a useful empirical detail—as the finding is outside the geographical scope of this chapter—is the fact that in recent years *East German women working full-time had consistently higher median salaries* than their male colleagues. This is due to East Germany’s specific sector structure with its dominance of public and medical sectors and prevalence of standard wages (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2022), and it highlights the theoretical argument that in most of the investigation period, *government employment-related activity has favoured female labour*.

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Gender Power Balances and Changes in the Socio-Spatial and Socio-Material Practices of Drinking in Ireland

John Connolly

1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I use Norbert Elias's theoretical formulations, and the broader figurational approach they form, to consider the relationship between changes in the gender power balance and changes in socio-material and socio-spatial aspects of alcohol consumption in Ireland¹ from the early twentieth century up to the present. Over the course of the latter half of the twentieth century, alcohol consumption in the Republic of Ireland has risen significantly. Between 1948 and 1970, per capita consumption increased from 3.2 to 5.1 litres (Daly, 2016, p. 141; Walsh,

¹ Given the period covered, Ireland refers to the territory of the whole island. I use the terms Irish Free State and Republic of Ireland from 1949 to refer to the 26-county state that emerged after partition in 1921.

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1980). In both the period up to 1980, and after, much of this growth has been attributed to women and younger generations—in terms of both a rise in the numbers drinking and the quantity consumed (Walsh, 1980; Smyth et al., 2011). My focus in this chapter also connects changing power relations between men and women and changes in drinking practices, but I seek to emphasise how and why the power balance changed and how it was also reflected in socio-material and socio-spatial changes connected with drinking practices and not just increased consumption.

2 GENDER RELATIONS AND FIGURATIONAL SOCIOLOGY

The application of figurational sociology to gender relations has aroused considerable debate at certain times (Delmotte, 2022; Dunning, 1999; Ernst, 2003). It has been explicitly deployed by followers of Elias since the early 1970s (Dunning & Sheard, 1973), particularly in relation to sport, though not exclusively. The issue of gender relations was also a specific aspect of Elias's work—the locus of explicit and implicit reference across his many works rather than in one location has perhaps masked this to a degree. Indeed, in a recent paper, Delmotte (2022, p. 84) seeks to account for where and how gender issues arise in Elias's work “in more or less (un) expected and (in)direct ways”. While denoting that her review is not exhaustive, and explicitly excluding letters and forewords, Delmotte identifies and considers several works in which Elias directly addresses the subject of gender relations, several of which I draw upon in my synthesis in this chapter. Of course, whether Elias explicitly addressed gender relations (which he did) or the extent of this does not preclude sociologists and others from applying or testing his formulations in respect of gender or indeed or other sets of social relations.

Elias repeatedly stressed in his works that the motor of changes in feelings, attitudes and behaviour is always connected to changes in power relations. And although studies of gender require, *de facto*, an examination of power ratios, past and prevailing, they also demand, following a figurational approach, an examination and consideration of other social processes which in an unintended way contribute to a lessening of power inequalities. Indeed, Elias (2009a, 2014), and some of those who later sought to apply and test his theoretical formulations on gender relations (Dunning, 1999; Dunning & Maguire, 1996; Dunning & Sheard, 1973), identify several processes which have facilitated, in an unplanned way, changes in the power balance between the genders—towards less unequal

power relations. These include state formation and pacification processes, expanding social interdependences and a broader process of functional democratisation, theoretical formulations Elias developed and outlined in *On the process of civilisation*. State formation both propelled and reflected greater state pacification as it involved greater control and regulation of violent behaviour in an expanding array of more diverse settings. The increasing constraints on the use of violence by those other than agents of the state, in conjunction with expanding social interdependences, generates a social context in which the threshold of repugnance towards engaging and witnessing violent acts advances. This, Elias (2012) argued, was part of a broader movement generated and sustained by expanding interdependences and the development of a state monopoly for the control of violence in which people experienced a greater social pressure to exercise greater self-control over their behaviour and emotions. It is crucial to stress two points here. First, given the processual nature of this dynamic, it is important to emphasise that these developments are neither linear nor teleological. An overall directional movement can still involve schisms and counter spurts or changes that occur at a different pace for different social cohorts (Elias, 2009a). The second point concerns the concept of an advance in threshold of repugnance towards violence. The concept does not, to quote Dunning and Maguire (1996, p. 313), “imply a denial of the continuing occurrence of male violence towards females”. That was most certainly the case in Ireland as the work of Diver (2019) documents in the case of domestic or martial violence.

Elias (2014), and later Dunning (1999), also identified technological developments—specifically technologies concerning birth control and the menstrual cycle—and social and economic processes (labour market developments, the expansion of state) as processes which have facilitated a change in the power ratio between men and women. I too draw upon and consider these developments in my analysis and synthesis concerning temporal, spatial and material changes concerning drinking in Ireland. Interestingly, in perhaps his most explicit study of gender power relations, Elias (2009a) drew on the example of prohibitions imposed on women of the ancient Roman upper classes, which included drinking wine, and on later emancipations, to reveal and explain the changing structure of the gender power balance.

3 DRINKING AND EMANCIPATORY SPURTS

The historian Diarmaid Ferriter (1999, p. 5) refers to a seventeenth-century visitor to Ireland who “wrote of the curious mixture of over-indulgence and crudity which seemed to be associated with Irish drinking habits, practices which seemed to traverse class and gender boundaries”. By the early 1900s, much greater social demarcation in terms of gender and class had developed. This segregation was particularly evident in specific social spaces, with public houses by then somewhat of a “male preserve”, to borrow Dunning and Sheard’s (1973) phrase; the entry of women into such spaces frowned upon, and generally considered shameful (Kearns, 1996). Not only was the social space in which drinking occurred a target for stigmatisation, so too was the very act of drinking. Women were deemed to have an innate biological disposition which made them susceptible to excessive and uncontrollable drinking. In a paper to the *Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland* in 1902, the barrister William Lawson (1901/1902) maintained that the lower classes and women had an inherent inability to resist the temptations of drink:

In many cases the trade is not confined to groceries, but extends to draperies and such like goods. This leads to drinking and drunkenness, especially amongst women, who, as one witness says, have no sense of shame in entering a grocery and having a drink while waiting for their goods. (1901/1902, p. 110)

The evidence from Belfast is that surreptitious dealing goes on in these establishments, especially by women, and that women take away drink with them, and it is put down with the husband’s account as groceries. (1901/1902, p. 114)

This focus, concern about and stigmatising of women drinking, and drinking by “lower class” men too, would persist in the decades following the formation of the Irish Free State. In 1926, a paper by a member of the judiciary to the Catholic Truth conference suggested:

The women of Ireland, heretofore, renowned for their virtue and honour, go about furnished with the paint-pot, the lip-stick and the rest of a meretricious armoury, and many of them have acquired the habit of intemperance, perhaps one of the sequels to their lately adopted vogue of smoking. (*Irish Independent*, 13 October 1926, p. 7)

By the 1930s, as Ferriter (1999) notes, there was growing concern within the temperance movement about “the preponderance of women who were beginning to drink more openly” (p. 111), with verbal attacks on women drinking “frequent, sustained and virulent” (p. 112). Yet, the broader narrative in which these censures were framed suggest that some women, at least, were adopting more liberated attitudes and behaviours, for alongside this criticism ran references to smoking, cocktails, wine and social parties (Ferriter, 1999, p. 112). A 1937 editorial in the middle-class newspaper the *Irish Times* (29 November, p. 6), written clearly in the context of a recent meeting of the Pioneer (temperance) movement, claimed, “Drinking among women, especially young women and girls, is clearly increasing, and the increase mainly is due to the changing social habits of the younger generation”. The article went on to suggest:

The appearance of a women in a public-house bar probably would be as unusual to-day as it was twenty or thirty years ago, and there is nothing to suggest that the increased drinking by women and girls is done in public bars in any part of the country. The drinking of intoxicating liquors by women merely is another manifestation of the “new freedom” which women achieved a short while ago, and which still is so much of a novelty that stability has not been reached yet.

As is implied, the pub at this point is still deemed a male preserve. The journalist also contends that more women were drinking, and/or drinking greater quantities. There is further, supportive, evidence that a change in behaviour around women’s drinking was noticeable at this time. For instance, in a 1932 interview with a 105-year-old Dublin woman, the journalist quoted the woman’s observations on the behaviour of men and women:

I don’t think they are women at all, with their smoking and powdering and all the rest. God help the man that gets any of them. I am disgusted at their smoking and drinking—trying to turn themselves into men, and not realising how ridiculous they are making themselves, with their clothes to their knees and their shapeless figures ... the men are just as bad. If you go down the town you see grey ‘ould fellahs’[old fellows], shaved and powdered, in their short breeches tied around their knees, trying to look young. And then there are others going about without hats. I can’t make them out at all. The girls are turning into men and the men are behaving like girls. (*Irish Times*, 8 January 1932, p. 8)

Such changes in behaviour are indicative of an emancipatory spurt and correlatively a shift towards less unequal power relations between the genders. Despite the fact that the 1920s and 1930s in the Irish Free State are considered a period when women's rights regressed or when power inequalities remained relatively stable (Daly, 2006; Diver, 2019), there were social processes which facilitated a movement in the direction of less unequal power relations between men and women. For instance, by the 1930s, state formation (Irish Free State) and perceived state legitimacy, had advanced to a significant degree, though it was still fragile. The new state's monopoly for the control of violence became stronger and with that, a more pacified social space developed (Dolan, 2005). More broadly, there was an advance in the threshold of repugnance towards violence. It does not mean violence disappeared, but there is evidence that violence declined somewhat. For instance, O'Donnell (2005) shows that there was a gradual but considerable decline in homicide rates from early 1900 through to the 1930s. He is explicitly supportive of Elias's theoretical formulations in accounting for this, arguing that the development of greater self-restraint in people, and the monopolisation of violence by the state, lead to fewer impulsive killings and the gradual pacification of interpersonal interactions. The significance of these developments is that they generate a social context in which power based on strength and violence, which is generally a power resource for men, is reduced somewhat (Dunning, 1999). The relative, and limited, aspect to this must be borne in mind though, as Diver's (2019) work on marital violence—violence by a husband towards his wife—clearly documents. Undoubtedly, the limited state protection of women from martial violence contributed to women's still subordinate position. Overall though, the empirical data would suggest a movement in the direction of a broader pacified social space and an advance, however marginal or restricted that may have been, in the threshold of repugnance towards violence.

Another significant development, which suggests a tilting of the power balance in the direction of women, concerns changes in family size and the reasons behind this. Daly (2006, p. 573) notes that between 1911 and 1946 Irish marital fertility fell by approximately 20 per cent, regardless of the duration of the marriage, with the decline greatest in the more recent marriages and amongst professional couples. The latter indicates that middle- and upper-middle-class families were becoming smaller and in a planned way. Indeed, Daly found that even by 1911 some Irish couples were limiting family size. By the 1930s and 1940s, according to Daly,

knowledge concerning family planning in the form of the safe method was spreading amongst some members of the urban middle classes. To quote Diver (2019, p. 27), who acknowledges differences around class, income and religious affiliation, “Well-off couples, then, generally had fewer children than the poor”.

Daly (2006, p. 573) also emphasises the point that fertility management achieved without the use of mechanical methods of contraception “depend on a degree of cooperation and consent between husbands and wives, and most specifically trust and consideration on the part of husbands for their wives”. Such changes around family planning were both a source and a reflection of a power shift involving a reduction in the power inequality between men and women (Elias, 2014). So, while Daly and Diver identify this period in the Irish Free State as largely regressive in terms of women’s rights, a closer reading of their work actually contributes in part to explaining how particular social processes facilitated a change in the power-ratio between men and women, although it was generally more pronounced for those women drawn from a specific social stratum—women from the urban middle classes. It is also possible that the emancipatory spurt experienced by this stratum ran in tandem with counter spurts experienced by many other groups of lower-class women. As Elias (2009a, p. 243) noted, “one discovers within the millennial development several spurts towards a lessening of the social inequalities between women and men – mostly within single social strata and, maybe, with simultaneous or subsequent counter-spurts”.

It is important to stress that the gender power balance remained decidedly uneven at this point, laying very much in favour of men with women still deemed largely subordinate and inferior to men within Irish society more generally. By the 1940s, overindulgence in alcohol consumption and loose morals were again being linked, with woman the primary target of this stigmatisation process (Ferriter, 1999, p. 143). Although pubs were still, and perceived to be, a largely male preserve, women were coming to occupy this space to a greater degree than in the past. The development of what were called lounges in pubs reflected rather than generated a change in the power balance. Although the arrival of lounge bars is mainly associated with the 1960s (Holohan, 2018), concerns about the emergence of the lounge bar and drinking by younger generations, including women, began to surface in the 1940s (*Irish Times*, 15 January 1943, p. 1; 10 October 1944, p. 3; 1945, 15 October 1945, p. 1). The sharing of space within the enclave of what was previously a male domain, amplified and

embodied the challenge to the established position of men, and perhaps too the reduction in their power chances, however small, that men were coming to experience. As with the 1930s, this rise in the power chances of women was facilitated by the social processes noted previously. The decline in the birth rate of middle-class families continued into the 1950s (Diver, 2019), while employment opportunities also changed. Clarke (2016) notes that white-collar office and secretarial work employment for women were areas that showed the greatest increase between 1936 and 1961—rising from 7 per cent to 17 per cent—while there were advances too in respect of the higher professions. As I explain later, this type of employment (which accelerated more rapidly from the 1960s) was also a process which contributed to changes in the power balance between men and women. Changes in family law in 1957 also enhanced the power chances of married women (Diver, 2019).

It is likely that the limited emancipatory gains connected with these processes were experienced only by some cohorts rather than being a reflection of a collective rise. The broader social structure was still one in which the majority of women were held to be subordinate to men (Daly, 2006; Diver, 2019). Reflective of this was the social demarcation between the genders in terms of the social spaces in which drinking occurred. Women who entered pubs were mainly confined to lounges or “snugs” (a small-enclosed area), an example of what Bucholc (2011, p. 428) calls “proxemic, spatiotemporal aspects of inequality between men (the established) and women (the outsiders)”.

4 ACCELERATIONS IN EMANCIPATORY PROCESSES: THE 1960s

Both historians (Daly, 2016; Holohan, 2018) and sociologists (Dolan, 2009a, 2009b) have identified the 1960s as a time of significant change in the Republic of Ireland. The economic opportunities and resources available to many, and in particular women and younger generations, expanded dramatically in the 1960s and early 1970s. Between 1951 and 1971, the number of young women employed in commercial and public administration functions, as well as other state functions such as teaching and nursing, increased while employment in personal services and agriculture declined (Holohan, 2018, p. 82). The change in the structure of employment was as significant as the increase in employment in terms of reshaping gender power relations. The movement away from family-based and/

or agricultural and domestic service employment meant they experienced “much greater independence than those working in a family business” (Daly, 2016, p. 130). That much of this employment was urban based and non-familial enhanced the scope for more individualised behaviour. Not only was familial and church supervision reduced by this so too was dependence on these social units. Indeed, as Daly (2016, p. 141) notes, “[i]t is more difficult to exercise control over a son or daughter who is earning a regular wage or salary and perhaps living away from home”.

The increasing use of birth control devices in the form of the contraceptive pill from this period (Kelly, 2020)² also contributed to an enhancement in the power chances of some women. Combined, these developments—increased and different labour market opportunities and advances in birth control—facilitated a lessening in power inequalities between men and women (Elias, 2014). This less uneven power structure, relative to previous decades, also found expression in a social reconfiguring of the space in which drinking occurred. Women now increasingly frequented the social enclaves previously the preserve of men—public houses, and the various social spaces within them. While some women had frequented bars in the past, and the idea of the lounge bar had existed for several decades, the changes occurring were now more overt. Holohan (2018, p. 123) cites a quote from the Irish novelist Ita Daly in 1967 describing her feelings at the greater inclusion of women in such spaces at that period:

You could say we have brought civilisation to the whole affair. What is more, we have brought money to it – and that is why publicans like to woo us. Like it or not, women in pubs are now an established part of the contemporary scene.

The demarcation of space, which involved the social pressure on women to confine themselves to specific spatial zones such as the “snug” or lounge was also becoming a rarity at this time (Daly, 2016) and experienced as such. One female journalist writing in 1964, reflecting on her own personal experience somewhat sardonically, mused as to whether snugs still existed in pubs:

² As Kelly (2020) explains, although contraception was only legalised in 1979, the restrictions were circumvented for some in the 1960s through the prescribing of the contraceptive pill as a menstrual cycle regular.

The experienced barman coped with us firmly—"the ladies would be more comfortable in the snug"—and in the snug we went. The snug, it may be necessary to explain—do they still exist, I wonder?—was a small corner of the bar proper, screened off from the vulgar gaze by a rough partition. (*Irish Times*, 30 September 1964, p. 22)

The further expansion of state functions in the 1960s also contributed, though unplanned and unintended, to a restructuring of the gender power relation. As Wouters (2019, p. 135) maintains, the expansion of state organisations in relation to welfare, education and healthcare "enabled women and young people to feel and act more independently of their husbands and fathers". Furthermore, Wouters argues that as all citizens become more interdependent, with many becoming less subordinate to their former (male) superiors as part of this process, it also means that not only does the authority of the latter diminish but the volume of voices bemoaning and complaining about this loss increases (Wouters, 2019, p. 135). Such a dynamic and related practices is also evident in the context discussed here—the breaking down of the socio-spatial demarcation in pubs. For instance, writing in the *Irish Times* in 1961 (28 February, p. 6) the journalist Maurice Gorham in a lengthy article warns against what he sees as the potential invasion by women of male only spaces within public house. The less unequal power structure and its reflection in a changed socio-spatial landscape within drinking establishments did not mean the end of the power contests around drinking as men sought to readjust to this new—less unequal—power structure. It found expression in the guise of a new zone of demarcation and stigmatisation involving the socio-material element of drinking—the size of glasses.

The Bar is the place you expect to find men and pints, the Lounge the place where you may find women and probably won't find pints. That used to be the general plan. If you were a man, you had your choice. If you were a woman, you went to the Lounge... The key factor is very few women want pints. The pint of stout is not a feminine drink; even where it is obtainable you seldom see a woman drinking it. (*Irish Times*, 28 February 1961, p. 6)

The gendered labelling of the material element of drinking as either unfeminine and feminine formed part of a new stigmatisation process by established male groups. Up to that period, it was not unusual for men to drink from half-pint sized glasses; this can be observed from old

photographs through the decades³ (see, for example, Breslin & Buckley, 2021, p. 158 for 1961). More significantly, although drinking by men from pint glasses was also very common, drinking from a half-pint glass (or simply “a glass” as it was known as) carried no social stigma or threat to masculine identity. The stigmatising of women drinking from pint glasses and the simultaneous conflation of half-pints with femininity would in time both de-masculinise and amplify the social risk associated with the practice for men—a social risk that still remains to some degree today.

The stigmatising of women drinking from a pint glass emerged from the felt threat experienced by some men to their position in society as the power dynamic shifted in the 1960s. So, while the more overt segregation of men and women through designated social spaces—the front bar (men) and lounge bar (women) and the snug (women)—had dissipated, evolving into shared spaces, more subtle means of expressing superiority were now deployed. The conflation of women, half-pints and femininity was continually reinforced to the point of normalising it. For example, in 1966 the politician, Professor Patrick Michael Quinlan, in a debate in Seanad Éireann (the Republic of Ireland’s Upper House of Parliament) in which he complained about the scale of alcohol advertising on Irish television, declared

to have this insidious encouragement, day in, day out, to our young sons of 17 and 18 years, this insidious effort to get the message across to them that they are not smart, not with the present age, if they are not able to take their drink as the men drink on Telefís Éireann [the national broadcasting service] and if they are not able to take their lady friends into the bars as is shown on Telefís Éireann to be the smart thing to do, she for a glass and he for a pint? (cited in Holohan, 2018, p. 123)

Indeed, many bars began to refuse to serve pint glasses to women customers, a practice that continued into the 1970s.

As the networks of social interdependences bonding people in the Republic of Ireland expanded and became denser in the 1960s, it generated a greater social pressure for people to curb their emotions, owing to the need to take others into greater consideration (Dolan, 2009a). Even in situations where people disagreed, or were more hostile, to various changing situations, there was now a greater need to exert greater restraint

³ See, for example, Breslin and Buckley (2021, p. 158).

over what they said, and did, relative to times past. Thus, the changing power balance reshaped both male and female habituses and the culture of drinking. Furthermore, in the broader social context of increasing social interdependences and advances in functional democratisation, the shift in the power balance towards less-unequal gender relations tends to become more transparent to all. For instance, Maurice Gorham, the same journalist quoted earlier who lamented the demise of male-only social spaces in pubs, and vilified women for drinking from pint glasses in 1964, now wrote in 1969:

Whether you like it or not, there is a lot to be said about the new style pub. It makes things easier for unescorted women who want to get a drink and snack without encountering the furtive zenana-type atmosphere of the snug. (*Irish Times*, 29 July 1969, p. 15)

As the power ratio between generations and genders declined in the 1960s and 1970s, younger “female” generations were enabled to make more choices, one of which was to begin drinking at a younger age (Walsh, 1980). A further development was a change in the framing of women drinkers, from one associated with moral failings, weakness and the need for protection, towards that of empowered and choosing consumers. Images of women as the central characters in alcohol advertising increased, while they also became the target of such advertising in their own right (Daly, 2016).

The 1970s saw a significant increase in overall levels of alcohol consumption in the Republic of Ireland. This was partly attributed to a rise in the number of female drinkers as well as to an increase in the quantity consumed by them. Part of the reporting of this was to frame women as independent-minded consumers (*Irish Times* 3 May 1978, p. 13). As in the 1960s, women in the 1970s continued to challenge their subordinate status in more organised and overt ways. Feminist groups increasingly contested the status of women within various social contexts and spaces (Daly, 2016). However, as Elias (2014, p. 31) observed in relation to the women’s suffrage movement of the early 1900s, while the deliberate efforts of activists certainly helped achieve specific gains other processes, “not directly connected with the women’s cause played at least as important a part in the growing equalisation between the power chances of women and men”. In the 1970s, in the Republic of Ireland, labour market opportunities for women increased further through the expansion of state

services and the removal of obstacles to employment. The latter enhanced by the removal of what was known as the marriage bar⁴ in 1973 (Daly, 2016). As such, changes in state policy also served to alter the power balance. For instance, in 1974 government legislation transferred the payment of the children's allowance (state social welfare) from fathers to mothers (Diver, 2019).

By the late 1970s, the tendency to refuse to serve various alcohol beverages in pint glasses to women was in decline and the practice itself was starting to generate feelings of embarrassment. One male writer in the *Irish Times* in 1974 (29 March, p. 14) denounced "the publican who refuses to serve women pints only half pints". Social interdependences in the form of increasing bonds and networks of competition and cooperation mean that for the people involved there is a strong compulsion to observe both themselves and those they are linked to through such networks. A further aspect of this is that social identification between those involved can increase (Elias, 2010). It was the expansion in social interdependences bonding people and the advance in mutual identification it fostered for many which generated greater shame feelings amongst men towards this practice of refusing women pints. In 1977, a female journalist writing under the heading "A pint of beer may not be yours, [*sic*] girls if you try some pubs" went on to recount, "a taxi driver was telling me the other day about having to buy his wife two half pints all night in a pub in Ballyfermot after the barman refused to serve her pints" (*Irish Times*, 11 April 1977, p. 11). This was indicative of the change that was coming about as many men no longer identified with such views and felt there was no stigma or shame in women drinking pints.

By the early 1980s, the refusal to serve women in a specific part of a pub or a pint glass was increasingly rare. In a 1983 book review by the journalist Mary Maher (*Irish Times*, 29 October 1983, p. 12), which dealt with women and alcohol, she observed:

[if you] have the impression that girls in jeans have been knocking back pints and housewives purchasing liquor routinely since the start of time, you are undoubtedly one of the younger generation and the significance of the fact that women's drinking has trebled in the past decade may be lost on you.

⁴The marriage bar was introduced in the Irish Free State in 1932. It required women to leave paid employment on marriage. It was removed in 1957 for those in teaching.

While the practice of refusing to serve women pints had largely disappeared, a residue of the past remained in the social habitus of many men and women. In a 1985 article on dating etiquette with middle-class private schooled teenagers, and also university students, the journalist reported “Boys drink pints: ‘Drinking as many pints as you can without falling over proves you’re a man’ – girls drink shorts. Drinking beer is ‘unfeminine’ say these boys” (*Irish Times*, 2 December 1985, p. 13). It illustrates the deep-rooted nature of the gender associations that developed in the 1960s around a particular socio-material aspect of drinking and the transmission of these attitudes and feelings across generations.⁵ As Elias (2009b) maintained, there can often be a time lag (several generations even) between changing power structures and their full reflection in personality structures. Nonetheless, they were still transformed in the sense that while some members of both sexes may have retained such attitudes, social behaviours had changed—women were not prevented by men from drinking from pint glasses—rather, such feelings and attitudes were “pushed behind the scenes” (Elias, 2012).

In the following decades, the scale of interdependences in which people in the Republic of Ireland were enmeshed became much denser, longer and more complex. This was driven by various social processes including the country’s entry (1973) and further integration into the European Economic Community (later European Union), ongoing urbanisation, an expansion of state functions, and from the late 1990s expanded international networks of trade and commerce. While these social interdependences were the social driver of habitus change, they were simultaneously a source of the increasing power chances of women. They enhanced the labour market opportunities for women and greater economic independence of women. Furthermore, and notwithstanding the contested nature of the process, birth control became more widely available to more women (Kelly, 2020). Over the same period, an expansion of social protections by the State, in terms of welfare and from the threat of physical violence, also contributed to a further change in the gender power ratio in the direction of less unequal relations. This enhanced state protection of women, and their income and property, should not be interpreted as complete or ideal—this was a relative change in relation to previous decades. Another effect of the expansion of social interdependences of this nature in

⁵ During one of my university classes in 2022, in which I discussed this, one female undergraduate student stated that she associated pints with men and half-pints with women.

conjunction with a lessening of power inequalities between different social groups was to increase the opportunities for greater individual choice and advance the socio-psychological process of individualisation—the I-feelings of people strengthened (Elias, 2010). An advance in the process of social individualisation means the autonomy of a person increases in respect to those around them (Elias, 2014). Consequently, more people from diverse social strata felt more emboldened to make their own choices about how to live without the same constraints and pressures they might have experienced in the past from family and other we-groups. The other side of this dynamic was the exercise of greater consideration and tolerance for others and the decisions they made. This too is a feature of greater mutual identification. Consequently, more people felt less comfortable or certain about telling others how they should live in terms of their choices and behaviours across a wide range of social contexts (Dolan, 2009a, pp. 131–312).

By the mid-1990s, the age at which young women first began to drink alcohol merged with that of young men for the first time (Smyth et al., 2011), while overall consumption levels continued to increase, peaking in the early 2000s (Hope, 2007). By the 2000s, the practice of women drinking from pint glasses was so accepted that any reference to it now largely involved an element of self-mockery as illustrated by this comment from a female journalist on the declining consumption of Guinness at the time: “Women in particular are eschewing the big dirty pints” (*Irish Times*, 2 September 2006: B5). Indicative too of this overall change—post 2010—was the increasing use of images of women drinking from pint glasses in advertising campaigns by commercial brewing companies; advertisements prior to this had tended to use the half-pint glass in images of women drinking.

It is quite possible to find members of both sexes, and perhaps from different generations, who still hold the view that women should not drink from pint glasses. This reflects the difficulty that both established and outsider groups experience when changes in the personality structure lag those of social structures.

The development of less-unequal gender relations, and related individualisation processes, have permitted and led to the emergence of more diverse types of drinking contexts, behaviours, and attitudes towards drinking—some of which I have outlined in this chapter. Perhaps one of the interesting features of the changes in drinking is how Irish men’s drinking retained what could be called a model setting function in relation

to alcohol consumption—an ability to drink considerable quantities of alcohol carries largely positive connotations. The following is an extract from an article on drinking by female university students in 2010:

Cliona is drinking Southern Comfort whiskey and red lemonade, Sophie's a pint of Guinness, and Alice a pint of Heineken ... I asked the three of them what they considered excessive drinking. "Drinking until you're sick," answers Cliona ... "drinking until you black out and pass out," says Alice... Do they consider girls drink as much as boys? They nod. Alice laughs. "I know boys who tried to keep up with me and couldn't." (*Irish Times*, 8 October 2010, p. 17)

The consumption of a significant quantity of alcohol, euphemistically referred to as "how many pints" one is able to consume, by Irish men has over the decades tended to carry positive value meanings for them. Many reports of male drinking are deemed "binge drinking" (*Irish Times*, 17 March 2009), and such feats are often referred to as awe inspiring endeavours (Kearns, 1996) and/or in relation to espousals of "being a man" and related ideals of masculinity. For instance, in a contribution to the state's National Men's Health Policy consultation process in the late 2000s, one man stated that if he couldn't "skull [drink] 16 pints", he wasn't "a real man" (*Irish Times*, 17 March 2009). Drunkenness too is an accepted aspect of this ideal so long as it takes place alongside the consumption of significant quantities of alcohol. This male-dominated image of drinking and the attitudes towards it have also come to frame part of the social habitus of many contemporary women drinkers, as illustrated above. The development of this attitude and behaviour in the social habitus of women emanates from the intertwining of several interrelated processes—the remaining power inequality and related subordinate position of women relative to men; the continuing association between masculinity and drinking; and the association between drink and the Irish we-image which is deeply ingrained in the Irish habitus. The embodying and expressing of Irish identity (first by men) has come to be closely aligned with this type of drinking over the course of the twentieth century. Consequently, in the context of an established-outsider figuration of men and women, where men retain an established position, though to a lesser degree than in the past, men occupy a model setting function around the consumption of alcohol, one in which the ability to drink a significant quantity of alcohol is often revered. The fusion of these processes has greatly shaped the

contemporary drinking culture of women in the Republic of Ireland. The extent of this can be seen from the fact that a form of drinking involving very large quantities of alcohol and getting excessively drunk, which was for decades associated with male values and identities (and Irishness), has partly been internalised by many women—it is a form of drinking found amongst Irish women from different socio-demographic groups in contemporary Irish society.

5 CONCLUSION

Over the course of the twentieth century in Ireland, the shaming of women for drinking, drinking in specific social spaces and drinking from a specific type of glass gradually lost its function and meaning. These changes ran in parallel with the gradual, and uneven, decline in the steep power differential between men and women. While the overall trend was towards a lessening in power inequality, it was more moderate and limited up to the 1960s, often, running in parallel with counter-movements and benefiting some groups of women more than others. Post the 1960s, this process of a declining power imbalance between men and women accelerated and became dominant, notwithstanding de-accelerations in this dynamic at particular times. It is the velocity of the changes in the 1960s, and the fact that they emanated from a collective social rise for women, which tends to mask the emancipatory spurts experienced by groups of women from specific social groups, often from the higher social classes, prior to the 1960s. Equally, changes around drinking, for both men and women, were not always smoothly experienced even when the power structure had changed.

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On the Side of Women: A Dotted Line Civilising Process

Florence Delmotte

1 THE GENDER DIMENSION IN ELIAS'S WORK: MAIN ENTRIES

Sex, gender and gender relations have generally not been considered major or central issues in Norbert Elias's figurational sociology, unlike the question of the "body." Pierre Bourdieu does not even mention Elias in his book *Masculine Domination* (2002), which revisits the work of some classics from this angle, the one of Michel Foucault to begin with, while it

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is known that he knew Elias's work very well and admired it greatly. More importantly, most feminist and gender studies have simply ignored Elias's sociology for decades. In contrast, the severe criticism that Jennifer Hargreaves addresses to Elias and his disciple and co-author Eric Dunning deserves attention (Hargreaves, 1992, 1996, 2010; see also Liston, 2018). According to her, Elias's and Dunning's research and writings on men's sports and men in sport (Elias & Dunning, 2008) failed to consider the gender dimension and male domination in sport (Hargreaves, 2010, p. 392). More generally, Jennifer Hargreaves criticises Elias for a theory of civilisation that claims to treat "civilisation" with "detachment" (Elias, 2007, 2012). Under the pretext of neutrality, such a concept would implicitly support conservative ideas (Hargreaves, 2010, p. 393) and the configurational approach would then remain permeated by masculinism (Hargreaves, 2010, p. 391).

In any case, Elias's historical sociology is rarely called upon to shed light on issues of sexual discrimination or gender (in)equality outside Elias's circle of fellows and the works of his followers. However, some of the latter have been precursors, be it on gender violence or on transformations of sexuality (van Stolk & Wouters, 1983, 1987; Wouters, 1998). In a second time, articles that are written more by women social scientists have fruitfully explored the seemingly non-obvious but challenging connection between feminist, gender and figurational studies (Brinkgreve, 2004; Bucholc, 2011; Ernst, 2022), notably in the field of sports given the concomitant rise in the 1980s of gender studies of sport and of the Eliasian-inspired sociology of sport (Liston, 2006, 2018; Mansfield, 2008). After 2017, despite the strong resonance between some of the issues raised by the #MeToo movement¹ and Elias's work on the civilising of manners, Elias's analyses have not really been cited much more. Again, there are some exceptions, but most of them come from "*Figurati*" and

¹ In October 2017, the producer Harvey Weinstein, a key figure in the Hollywood movie industry, was accused of sexual harassment by numerous actresses. Immediately afterwards, thousands of women stated that they too had suffered violence at the hands of men, using social networks and the #MeToo hashtag, and encouraging women to speak. The movement has grown with multiple variations with the hashtags #YoTambien, in Spain, #quellavoltache, in Italy, #MiraComoNosPonemos, in Argentina, and #Balancetonporc for the French version (Achin et al., 2019). The reaction to this unprecedented form of revolt was not long in coming. In France, to begin with, a tribune signed by 100 women and published in *Le Monde* (9 January 2018), defended the "freedom to importune" as "essential to sexual freedom" (see Delmotte, 2019).

Elias's readers of different generations (Delmotte, 2019; Dekker, 2019; Wouters, 2019, pp. 74–80; de Swaan, 2021).

Elias most often speaks in terms of “men and women” rather than “gender.” Of course, his work does not reduce men and women to their biological differences. Nor does Elias minimise the reality and the impact of these, or more precisely nor does he minimise the biological and physiological aspects of the human body, of the individuals' body. Elias, moreover, places greater importance to gender relations, and not only in relation to body and sexuality, and he is much more interested in transformations of gender inequality than most (often male) contemporary sociologists were (Guionnet & Neveu, 2009, pp. 342–344; Liston, 2018, pp. 362–363). It is true that he actually devoted only one whole important text to women and gender issues (Elias, 1987), and this text on ancient Rome also deals with other concerns that are more or less recurrent in Elias's writings. We will return to this later. In addition to this text on “The changing balance of power between the sexes,” issues relating to women and gender are present in dotted lines throughout his work since the 1930s and the major works *On the Process of Civilisation* (2012 [1939]) and *The Court Society* (2005 [1969]). One might say that related topics never really cease to stand in the background and seem even more important as a preoccupation at the end of Elias's life (Elias, 2014). This chapter first aims at showing or remembering this.

1.1 *Established and Outsiders*

For Elias's readers, gender relations and their transformations are commonly seen, on the one hand, as falling under the theory of “established–outsiders” relations, such as race relations or relations between generations (Mennell, 1992, pp. 131–136; Bucholc, 2011, pp. 429–431), and, on the other hand, as one aspect of the civilising process(es) and the transformation of manners (Wouters, 1998, 2019). From the first standpoint, gender relations, relations between men and women, are seen as particularly unequal, marked by a strong power differential, but have transformed through the centuries in one way or another due to specific and structural social changes. Briefly, the following issues are at stake when speaking about gender relations in terms of established–outsiders (Elias & Scotson, 2008): what specifically characterises such unequal relationships, and which conditions make that power balance become less or more unequal?

In his work on “durable inequalities,” the historical sociologist Charles Tilly refers to Elias and the theory of established–outsiders figurations as an alternative to essentialism, individualism and “mentalism” (Tilly, 1999, pp. 18–19). Tilly’s book is concerned with how and why, by what identical mechanisms, a wide variety of paired and unequal categories are fixed and locked in—black/white, male/female, citizen/foreigner, and so on. While Tilly seems less interested than Elias in the transformation and reduction of inequalities, he is interested in their transmission and reproduction in an Eliasian way. Tilly underlines that categorical boundaries are particularly efficient “if the boundaries in question incorporate already well-established forms of inequality” (Tilly, 1999, p. 11). This contributes to make them “habitual and sometimes even essential to exploiters and exploited alike.” Regarding gender, Tilly points that “male/female distinctions have acquired enormous, slow-moving cultural carapaces yet reappear within almost all social structures of any scale” (Tilly, 1999, p. 12) and that “the form and degree of gender exploitation have varied greatly, but no economy so far has lived without it” (Tilly, 1999, p. 146).

In a way, both Elias and Tilly situate their (second-tier) analyses of gender between a historical and an anthropological approach if we consider a framing composed of the pioneering works in France of the feminist historian Michelle Perrot, on the one hand, and of the feminist ethnologist Françoise Héritier (1996, 2002), on the other hand. The work of the latter is first of all structuralist, profoundly marked by the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss, and aims to extend and complement it. It is true that Françoise Héritier has moderated her analysis of the “universal” distinction between the feminine and the masculine and the universal character of male domination by focusing later on the “dissolution” of this hierarchy (Héritier, 2002). But historians had already tackled the transformations of the female condition (Duby & Perrot, 1991), the importance of women’s struggles, and the importance of considering together and historically other “differences” such as race and class (Perrot, 2006). In our view, such a dilemma, between structural domination and historical changes in domination, is present more in the form of a continuum in both sociologists Elias and Tilly. Tilly may sometimes appear closer to an anthropological or structural view, when Elias’s radically historical view is tempered by what he considered the uniqueness, in the history of societies, of the relationship between the male and female groups.

1.2 *The Civilising Process: Paths to Explore*

Beside the established–outsiders relations, a second but converging entry is the “process of civilisation” *stricto sensu*, that is to say, the book (Elias, 2012), and the more precise idea of a civilising of manners. Behaviour transformations between the sexes then appear as an aspect of a broader movement that profoundly affects the psychic economy of individuals, including the development of self-restraints in most men and women in their relations with each other and ways of thinking and feeling. Thus, the question is to know whether, to what extent and how transformations of manners relate to a changing balance of power between sexes and, again, which specific social conditions favour or disoblige such transformations.

The two converging perspectives, that of the established–outsiders theory and of the civilising process, should be linked through the issue of democratisation, that is to say the reduction of power differential in different areas, and the questions and hypotheses these perspectives outline obviously make a lot of sense. However, to continue to decipher gender issues from an Eliasian perspective, the second aim of this chapter is to suggest that other perspectives remain to be explored. At this stage, I see three that derive from or build on, and complement, the two major entries mentioned above. These other three are no more exclusively about relations between men and women, for Elias’s comprehensive vision avoids reifying and isolating the different aspects and levels of social life and considers them as historically connected. One hypothesis addresses the transformation of sensibilities in the long run, not to mention a supposedly increasing “sensitisation” of contemporary societies—a question at the core of the civilising process. The second one questions the emancipatory power of law and rights, a theme we find more present in Elias’s later texts (Elias, 1987), which could be linked to ideas of the increasing “legalisation” of social problems and the “judicialization” of extended forms of violence and discrimination. Finally, the third hypothesis is related to the individualisation of human societies as a long-term trend (Elias, 2010a), as Elias showed that it profoundly affects both individuals and groups’ identification and self-identification processes.

Recent years have seen a growing refusal to reduce people to their gender, skin colour or origin, including in the way they are named or referred to—and at the same time, a growing demand on the part of some individuals and groups to assume and claim their “difference” or “identity” in this way among other ones. These two apparently opposing trends can be

seen as different reflections of the same desire to fight against stigmatisation related to gender or origin, sexism and racism. There is also a growing questioning of the assignment of a gender or sexual orientation to a person, not only a growing recognition that a person should be free to choose or change it.

These trends, which might appear to be mostly cultural changes at first glance, may still contribute too little to abolishing concrete discriminations between men and women, gays, lesbians and heterosexuals, cisgender and genderfluid people, to stick to gender and sexuality. Social movements behind these changes can also be accused of contributing to the radicalisation of the reaction. But these developments reveal that profound transformations in the relationship between men and women have occurred, and more broadly between established groups and outsiders in relation to sex, gender and sexuality, towards less inequality, if not towards more tolerance and more decentred and detached views. In other words, some changes—for instance, about how one or one group is called, named, and how an individual designates *themselves*²—are to be considered one phase of a long ongoing process which is far from being straight and uniform. And observing such trends does not answer the question of the causes of the discrimination and violence that we still have to explain and combat. In my reading, Elias's thought contributes to this questioning, and aimed to contribute to a movement of emancipation via sociology, while not denying the existence of certain categories such as “men” and “women,” or even reaffirming them. This is not entirely in line with the turn taken by gender studies in the 1990s (Butler, 1990). However, Elias's work does not seem to be incompatible with the questioning of the gender divide.

2 WOMEN AND GENDER RELATIONS AS DOTTED AND GROWING CONCERNS

Starting not from feminist or gender studies but from a situated reading of Elias, I try in what follows to account for where and how gender issues appear in his work in more or less (un)expected and (un)direct ways. Without pretending to be exhaustive, I will look at various texts that

² See “Merriam-Webster dictionary adds ‘they’ as nonbinary pronoun” by André Wheeler (2019) in *The Guardian*, Wednesday 18 September 2019.

address the question of women and gender or develop hypotheses that contribute to shedding light on these issues until today.³

With the exception of the letters and forewords (Elias, 2009), and of few passages in *The Court Society* (Elias, 2005, in partic. 54–56, 209 ff, 260 ff; see also Bucholc, 2011), three texts directly and substantially address gender relations and women’s emancipation: one chapter in *On the Process of Civilisation* (Elias, 2012, pp. 166–185); the article “The changing balance of power between the sexes—a process-sociological study: the example of the ancient Roman state” (Elias, 1987); and in a minor mode, a very last text on “Freud’s concept of society and beyond it” (Elias, 2014), to which I will return in my conclusion. Different elements developed in these texts in relation to women and gender can be completed by those present in a late essay, “Changes in the ‘we-I’ balance” (2010a). The latter takes up essential ideas from Elias’s work while developing themes that are not present elsewhere and illustrates particularly well the political topicality of the work, its capacity to enlighten and question the present. It is based on these texts that I suggest that three assumptions or intuitions drawn from Elias are particularly stimulating and resonating today for thinking about gender issues in general and the changing situation of women in particular. They are of course not antinomic and, more of that, should be connected to each other. Already mentioned in the introduction, one of them is obviously about “civilising” the relations between the sexes and leads to the question of rising sensitivity to issues of gender domination; the second is about the emancipating though ambivalent and limited role of law and rights; the third is about the dynamics of identification of individuals and groups and the long-term trend to individualisation.

2.1 On the Process of Civilisation (1939) and Relations Between Men and Women

Richard Kilminster and Stephen Mennell report that, in a lecture he gave in 1984, Elias “recalled that shortly after completing *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* he had written a book-length typescript on ‘the changing

³ In the article published in *Sociologia and Antropologia* (Delmotte, 2022a, pp. 84–89), I argue that re-exploring certain aspects of Elias’s life very often overlooked, that is, his relationships with women and men or some of these relationships make sense in order to better understand his sociology and its links to gender issues.

gender balance of power between the sexes” and claimed: “I felt while writing *The Civilising Process* [that] I did not do justice to that subject, simply because there was too much material – so much to be said that I couldn’t fit it in. I have just a poor little chapter on the relationships between the sexes in *The Civilising Process*” (Kilminster & Mennell, 2009, p. XIX). A note in the first edition of *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* published in 1939 announced indeed that a future publication dedicated to the “transformations in the relations between the sexes” should complete the two volumes (Linhardt, 2000, p. 49). While it is interesting that 45 years later Elias would still justify himself in this way, by evoking this project, we will see that this chapter in the *Process* is not so “poor” although brief (20 out of 600 pages).

In his best-known work, Elias studies the transformation of manners and of the rules of good behaviour since the late Middle Ages in Europe, based on good manners books and other *traités d’étiquette* in force in European royal courts. The sociologist gives central importance to the shifts in the balance of power between social groups and to transformations of ruling groups, and links these two aspects together, manners and balance of power. In doing so, he does not follow a purely causalist scheme, nor does he develop a particularly optimistic theory about the prevalence or progress of Western “civilisation.” The book rather aims at deconstructing this notion, examining the way in which the psychic and emotional life of individuals depends on, and in turn influences, social structures and political institutions. This is well known. Elias observes that in the long term, public and private behaviours have changed towards greater “reserve” and “modesty” and a lowering of the threshold of “disgust” and “embarrassment.” These shifts pertain to a less-visible movement: the development of powerful forms of self-control that have become less and less conscious, which Elias names self-restraints. In other words, we can observe a gradual transformation of the individual’s “emotional economy” due, to put it briefly, to the growing interdependence between human groups. The latter is itself caused by demographic growth, urbanisation and technical innovations, among other factors leading to an increasing differentiation of social functions.

In the second volume of *On the Process of Civilisation (State Formation and Civilisation)*, Elias establishes the connection between the civilising of manners, on the one hand, and the development of the state and the monopolisation of legitimate violence, on the other hand. While the use of weapons was essential to a knight’s survival, recourse to physical

violence was excluded from the form of competition that men and women engaged in court society: “The means of struggle had been refined or sublimated” (Elias, 2012, p. 308). In other words, warriors in prestate society did not want to be “violent” men, but were forced into it. Noble men in the court society had no choice but to be “less violent,” including in their relations with women and their wives. Elias thus sees civilisation as an unplanned process (or a combination of unplanned processes) based on and connecting transformations of mental structures and social structures. In the long term, this process(es) led towards a relative decrease in power differentials, including between the sexes and the generations, at least in the twentieth century. He will come back to this later (Elias, 2008, 2014). Likewise, the increase in functional interdependences could explain the spread of behavioural models that were considered “civilised,” initially characteristic of the elites, towards the lower social strata (Elias, 2012, pp. 418–427).

2.1.1 “Changes in Attitudes Towards the Relations Between Men and Women”

In comparison with those focusing on aggressiveness, the passages of *On the Process of Civilisation* relating to sexuality may disappoint. In the first volume (*Changes in the Behaviour of the Secular Upper Classes in the West*), the chapter entitled “Changes in attitudes towards the relations between men and women” (Elias, 2012, pp. 166–185) begins with the transformations regarding the sexual education of (male) children in the century of Erasmus and the position of prostitutes, both subjects being related, both increasing unease and secrecy (Elias, 2012, pp. 166–174). The rest of the chapter actually concerns sexual, marital and gender relations more generally.

The main idea is that the court society led to a notable shift in the balance of power between men and women. Shortly, the physical superiority of men loses nearly all its value in an internally “pacified” state society, while the supposedly “feminine qualities” of gentleness, modesty, retreat, attention to others and strategic ability dramatically increase in worth when the importance of “salons” dominated by women increases: “The social power of the wife was almost equal to that of the husband” as “social opinion was determined to a high degree by women” (Elias, 2012, p. 179). Just as interestingly, “this strengthening of the social position of women signified (to express the point schematically) a decrease in the restrictions on their drives for women and an increase in the restrictions on

their drives for men. At the same time, it forced both men and women to adopt a new and stricter self-discipline in their relations with one another” (Elias, 2012, p. 180). In a social system that had long been dominated by men (and still was globally), it meant more reserve and *courtoisie* for all, *but first for men*, and more sexual freedom or equality *for women*. It signifies, for instance, that extra-conjugal relations were now more tolerated for women too, and not only for men, and that men were now interdicted to beat their wives, which had been authorised for long.

Elias notes that another wave of transformations occurred in the bourgeois society in the nineteenth century:

[B]ourgeois functions – above all, business life – demand and produce greater self-restraint than courtly functions. [...] [B]y the standard of bourgeois society, the control of sexuality and the form of marriage prevalent in court society appear extremely lax. Social opinion now severely condemned all extramarital relations between the sexes – though here, unlike the situation in court society, the social power of the husband was again greater than that of the wife, so that violation of the taboo of extramarital relationships by the husband was usually judged more leniently than the same offence by women. (Elias, 2012, p. 181)

To sum up, in matters of gender relations and sexuality in particular:

The process of civilisation does not follow a straight line. [...] In each phase there are numerous fluctuations, frequent advances or recessions of the internal and external constraints. An observation of such fluctuations, particularly those close to us in time, can easily obscure the general trend. One such fluctuation is present today in the memories of all: in the period following the First World War, as compared to the pre-war period, a ‘relaxation of morals’ appears to have occurred. (Elias, 2012, pp. 181–182)

From an apparent “relaxation of morals” it would therefore be misleading to conclude that a regression or backsliding took place since the civilising process cannot, in fact, be reduced to the quantitative progress and pure reinforcement of (self-)constraints. Elias uses the example of the bathing suit at the beach to show that a “relative degree of freedom”—for instance, to undress on a beach and neither “threaten” anyone nor suffer or feel threatened of sexual aggression—corresponds to a higher level of civilisation than having to protect one’s privacy at all costs:

[T]his change, and with it the whole spread of sports for men and women, presupposes a very high standard of drive control. Only in a society in which a high degree of restraint is taken for granted, and in which women are, like men, absolutely sure that each individual is curbed by self-control and a strict code of etiquette, can bathing and sporting customs having this relative degree of freedom develop. (Elias, 2012, p. 182)

However, this is by no means the only direction or way in which the process could develop, at least in the short term. In the 1930s, this is indeed one of the sociologist's concerns:

[W]e also find in our own time the precursors of a shift towards the cultivation of new and stricter constraints. In a number of societies there are attempts to establish a social regulation and managements of the emotions far stronger and more conscious than the standard prevalent hitherto, a pattern of moulding that imposes renunciations and transformation of drives on individuals with vast consequences for human life which are scarcely foreseeable as yet. [...] Like many other drives, sexuality is confined more and more exclusively, not only for women but for men as well, to a particular enclave, in socially legitimized marriage. (Elias, 2012, pp. 182–183)

Thus, if the process of civilisation is not synonymous with “progress,” it is reasonable to understand that, in this first text, Elias considers a “controlled relaxation of constraints” as a progression of the process of civilisation and, under certain conditions, even as a “progress”: namely, a self-control that does not exaggeratedly restrain “sex drive” but rather allows for sexual freedom based on what we consider today to be mutual respect, involving a certain relational equality and mutual consent (Wouters, 2019, pp. 76–77).

2.1.2 *The Transformations of Sensitivity and the Topicality of the Process*

The theses developed in the passages dedicated to gender relations in *On the Process of Civilisation* may shed light on the highly topical issue of the transformations of sensitivity, particularly regarding gender relations, violence against women and emancipation of women in various areas, including sexuality. Such transformations indeed operate in connection with the development of new social controls and other self-restraints imposed on human drives, and what we usually call “norms” or, abusively, “values.” These constraints both affect micro-social and intimate relationships in

everyday life, and are broadly present at the macro-social level, in the rules and functioning of the society's central institutions. It entails that transformations of sensitivity also have to do with symbolic forms of violence and discrimination—and symbolic forms of pacification and “egalitarisation”—and with the way violence, discriminations and equality are experienced and expressed by individuals and groups and performed through media in the society as a whole. These transformations thus concern the ways of reacting to and characterising violence and inequalities of all kinds, and what can be said or done without offending the opinion or sensitivity of this or that individual or group or of a majority in the society as a whole.

A tricky but interesting question left open by the *Process* regards the relationship between, on the one hand, a code of manners giving more and more prevalence or markers of respect to women until the nineteenth century in Western Europe and, on the other hand, a social and political structure where women remain largely dominated by men. In the twentieth century, the paradox seems to reverse itself: women win autonomy, the balance of power with men becomes less unequal and the code of manners relaxes. A common view is that today, “after #MeToo,” we could return to some kind of stricter moral code (Delmotte, 2019). This old code, which would come back into force, would be based, among other things, on explicit double consent—recalling the marriage rite—and on the condemnation of certain expressions of “vulgarity” or physical and verbal “provocation” in sexual matters. For some, such change should be interpreted as a regression, including for women, compared to years of supposed sexual freedom from the late 1960s. However, if one looks at it closer, the movement observed over the last ten years or more, and of course even more after the Weinstein scandal that triggered the #MeToo protest in 2017, is not a movement against sexual freedom for all—although such movements obviously exist. Rather, it reveals a greater refusal to consider women as sexual objects for men and a greater refusal of any kind of violence.

Cas Wouters precisely points out this issue:

In 2017, continued in 2018, the wave of protest by the #MeToo movement against virtually all degrees of sexual intimidation effectively broke the regime of silence that dominated these practices. It broke a major stronghold of this regime: internalised shame resulting from shaming the victims, and pressured the social codes dominating these experiences to allow for deeper and stronger feelings of anger, indignation and injustice. No longer

are these feelings almost automatically silenced by feelings of shame, but now shame is increasingly silenced by them. (Wouters, 2019, pp. 76–77)

That said, the impact of #MeToo is as undeniable as it is difficult to assess, as is its durability. The movement itself is the result of a long transformation of the gender balance of power and of the resulting changes in behaviour and sensibilities. Violence against women has become more intolerable (or less tolerated), but this trend is socially conditioned and by no means definitively established.⁴

This transformation is undoubtedly both irreducible and linked to a transformation of sensitivities that tends to establish new rules of behaviour and language, and not to re-establish the old ones, which have coexisted for so long with a very strong gender inequality. Such transformation can be seen—and deplored by some—as an endless increase in the importance of sensitivities or of sensibility, an over-sensitisation, of the society. However, it is clear that it is not exclusively about women, behaviour towards women and words used about women, but also about other dominated groups—first and foremost “people of colour,” homosexuals, children, in a society where the established are still largely adult, white, heterosexual, rich men. It is therefore understandable that the most ulcerate condemnation of such a transformation—“what was allowed is now forbidden”—comes mostly from established groups or those who identify with them, although they are outsiders in some cases, and who consider their status as threatened.

Finally, the “reality-congruence” in Elias’s analysis suggests that the sensitisation of a society, in the first meaning of the lowering threshold of repugnance, pain or indignation towards suffering caused to others, including by members of one’s “own group,” is not first the result of a

⁴Historical distance is lacking for an overall assessment of the impact of the #MeToo movement. Levy and Mattsson (2019) have evaluated the effects of #MeToo on the reporting of sexual crimes to the police in 31 OECD countries. They showed an increase in reporting that reflects a higher propensity to report sex crimes and not an increase in crime incidence; victims would perceive sexual misconduct a more serious problem following the movement. Among other attempts, on the side of more qualitative studies, we can mention the special issue of the French journal *Mouvements* (Achin et al., 2019), which looks at the “sexual revolts” after #MeToo under various aspects (the denunciation of violence, the tools of revolt and the reinvention of sexualities) and in different contexts. I thank my colleague Sophie Jacquot for these references. See also the wide-ranging and inclusive collective edited by Fileborn and Loney-Howes (2019) on “#MeToo and the politics of social change.”

“moralisation” of public and intimate life. Rather, this trend reveals an interdependence that has become less unequal between certain established and outsider groups and the resulting civilisation of their relationships. Elias returns to the dynamics of such change towards greater equality between men and women, or towards less inequality between them to better say, 50 years after the *Process*, in his only text entirely focusing on gender relations. This one is discussed in the following section.

2.2 “*The Changing Balance of Power between the Sexes—A Process-Sociological Study: The Example of the Ancient Roman State*” (1987) and the *Question of State and Law*

For Elias, as I already suggested, relations between men and women would have been “a lifelong favourite subject” (Linhardt, 2000, p. 49). While this may have been true, it was mostly disciples who explored this path, initially dealing with domestic violence (van Stolk & Wouters, 1983). A famous but half-credible anecdote recounts that the materials and notes Elias had accumulated over the years to carry out the project he had envisaged since the 1930s on transformations in gender relations were lost, thrown away by an overzealous housekeeper in the 1960s (Kilminster & Mennell, 2009, p. XIX; Linhardt, 2000, p. 50). In any case, in the mid-1980s, Elias resumed *in extremis* his work on the subject. First published in 1986 in an issue of the *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* devoted to gender studies, “The Changing Balance of Power between the Sexes” (Elias, 1987) focuses on the development of conjugal rights within marriage at the end of the Roman Republic, the only period about which he would have retained some material.

Elias’s idea is not that the transformation of a society towards greater equality between men and women would find its ultimate origin in a specific period of history. If Elias shows an interest in Antiquity, it is not to defend the idea of the linear evolution of the European tradition—as Jennifer Hargreaves (2010, p. 395) reproached him. His message seems much more modest and tempered:

With regard to the balance of power between the sexes the change did not lead from utter subjection of women in the early days to a gradual lessening of inequality. Instead one discovers within the millennial development several spurts towards a lessening of the social inequalities between women and men – mostly within single social strata and, maybe, with simultaneous

or subsequent counter-spurts. One of these spurts, that which occurred in the time of the Roman Republic and the early Empire, led from extreme social subjection of women to men before and within married life to a condition of virtual equality between the sexes within married life. This rather surprising development, the first of its kind, within a state society, as far as I know, influenced marriage customs throughout the Roman Empire. (1987, p. 290)

The text therefore does not propose a “return to Rome” but a *détour via* Rome which illustrates quite well the historical distancing promoted by Elias’s sociology and that could be helpful in “understanding present problems” (Elias, 1987, p. 314). The text also illustrates the merits of a kind of impertinence, both the author’s prudence and his freedom of tone.

2.2.1 *A Détour Through Marriage in Rome*

Elias begins by recounting a memory of an Indian couple he used to encounter in the streets of London years before. Even when the couple was deep in conversation, the wife was walking several steps behind her husband. Elias saw this as a symbol of what “has been termed ‘harmonious inequality’” (Elias, 1987, p. 287), an expression he also uses to depict his own parents’ relationship (Elias, 2013, p. 73). He compares it with the “terrifying custom” (Elias, 1987, p. 288) practised by certain casts in India which dictated that a wife had to follow her husband into death. In contrast, the code that characterised the middle and upper classes in modern and contemporary Europe was “more equivocal” (Elias, 1987, p. 289) as he already pointed in the *Process* (1939). Elias renounces to explain this paradox or “surprising problem,” merely presenting it. On the one hand, women continue to be subjected to male domination, while, on the other, “good behaviour [demands] instead that men should publicly treat women in a way usually accorded to socially superior and more powerful persons” (Elias, 1987, p. 289). According to Elias, this ambiguous code, which prevailed until at least the nineteenth century, seems nevertheless to indicate a power differential that was considerably lower than in the case of Indian wives and Chinese foot-bound women. It was a sign that European women were already able to defend themselves, that something had already changed.

In his usual style, Elias presents the problem in a disenchanted, inspiring way. Elias is not interested in the origin of inequality between men and women, as if equality were the norm (historically this is not the case at all).

Nor, of course, does he posit that inequality is “natural.” What he is interested in are the social conditions and processes that, in a particular context, have allowed gender relations to evolve towards less inequality. In the later stages of the Republic, he then identifies a “surprising” development towards relative equality between the sexes within marriage. Even though this relative equality within marriage later disappeared with the invasions and the rise of the Christian church, it nonetheless left traces, which also requires an explanation.

Before this development, and often afterwards, marriage resembled the acquisition of a woman by purchase (as in the Germanic *kaup*-) or a kidnapping, as evidenced by the rape of the Sabine women. For a long time, a married woman in Rome was the property of her husband, as were their children. If she was beaten, she had nowhere to turn. Returning to one of his key ideas from the *Civilising Process*, Elias explained this extreme state of female inferiority by the “structure of a society,” the prestate Roman society, “where of all the human faculties, muscle and fighting power had a social function of the highest order.” Thus, “it was not the relative physical weakness of women as such which accounted for the great power differentials between men and women” (Elias, 1987, pp. 292–293). The result was anyway that women typically held the position of “outsiders,” held at a distance by the “established,” that is, upper-class men. Up until the middle and even the end of the second century BC, women simply had no autonomous existence. They were not given a name. They were forbidden to have possessions, to request a divorce, even to drink wine. Until they married, they remained under their father’s tutelage, or that of another male relative. His authority then passed fully to the woman’s husband.

However, later historical texts give evidence of the option to conclude another form of marriage, one that did not include this transfer of tutelage over the woman from the father to the husband (Elias, 1987, p. 295). Such transformation was neither deliberate nor easy. The question of women’s status in Roman society indeed deeply divided men, who were less occupied by war after the final victory over Carthage (149 BC). Following Elias, it was initially the customs, not the laws, that reflected a profound shift in society: girls began to participate in their brothers’ education and turned away from household chores that were the *matrona*’s responsibility before. Next, and more importantly, a married woman could own possessions and, although girls were still given arranged marriages,

divorce—which had always been an easy, informal procedure for men—became available for women too. They were also free to choose their second husband and their lovers. On Catullus’s love for Claudia—a young poet in love with an older married-woman of superior rank—Elias evokes a form of *amour courtois*, which, in Rome, helped to expand the “range of emotions” (Elias, 1987, p. 300), as evidenced by Roman music and poetry, and led to a “higher level of self-discipline” in men–women relations.

This form of emancipation also reinforced the distance between the sexes. Married women “often identified themselves far more closely with their lineage than with that of their husbands” (Elias, 1987, p. 301), forming soon women networks of their own, with distinct rules. Finally, Elias mentions Appian of Alexandria, who recounted a pivotal incident in the Roman civil wars during the first century BC. A group of noblewomen led by Hortensia, the daughter of a famous orator, publicly rebelled against the triumvirs Octavian, Lepidus and Mark Antony, while “normally women did not take part in the assemblies held and in political decisions taken at the forum” (Elias, 1987, p. 301). These women dissented against the dictators’ decision to take away all their property as a way of punishing their fathers and husbands, while these women, unlike the men, were not even on the proscription list. Here are the words attributed to Hortensia by Appian, reproduced by Elias:

If we have done wrong as you say our husbands have, prescribe us as you do to them. But if women have not voted any of you public enemies, have not torn down your houses, destroyed your army, or led another one against you; if we have not hindered you in obtaining offices and honours – why do we share the penalty when we did not share the guilt. Why should we pay taxes when we have no part in the honours, the commands, the state-craft, for which you contend each other with such harmful results? Because this is a time of war, do you say? When have there not been wars, and when have taxes ever been imposed to women, who are exempted by their sex among all mankind? (Elias, 1987, p. 202)

In this episode, we see that some outsiders—the most privileged ones—had developed networks of solidarity making them able to protest. They were no longer willing to accept the image of themselves imposed by the established, or more exactly tend to reverse the stigma. Although the account of the incident, written two centuries later, is partly fictitious, the story speaks volumes about the independence these women had achieved

and its limitations, because the economic and moral emancipation of Roman noblewomen obviously did not extend to politics.

2.2.2 *The Transformation of the State, a Necessary But Not Sufficient Condition*

Elias goes on to examine “the reasons for this development of a less uneven balance of power between the sexes in Rome.” An initial explanation offered by the author highlights the growth of the city into a virtual empire. The senatorial class was no longer made up of peasant warriors. Instead, it became “a class of aristocratic holders of high military and civil offices owning immense estates” (Elias, 1987, p. 304). This means that the men of the aristocracy had become rich enough to give up their rights over married women and their property. Here, Elias puts forward a different argument than those which prevail in other texts. While it is understandable that peace and prosperity reduce the need to worry about survival and, therefore, lead to the refinement of civilisation, elsewhere these factors are insufficient to explain a lessening of inequalities. In the case of advanced industrial societies and European states, Elias posits that their “functional” and “institutional” democratisation, at the twentieth century, resulted firstly from the fact that outsider groups, first of all workers and lower classes, came to represent a social force that demanded they be conceded a position and recognised rights that were previously denied to them (Elias, 2006, pp. 61–63). A few years later, the model associated with *Les Trente Glorieuses* (The Glorious Thirty) was outlined during dark times, after the Great Depression in the United States and in the context of the Second World War in Europe. Political leaders, institutions and dominant groups can no longer act or maintain themselves without the support of the masses, and of women, who have borne the burden of war twice.

A second explanation refers to the theses of the *Civilising Process* and the role of the state. Elias stresses the importance, in the pacified Roman Republic, of the stability of administrations capable of enforcing laws and judicial decisions, ensuring the security of goods and people, and protecting wives from their husbands (Elias, 1987, p. 307). It seems a stretch to infer that Elias posits the state as a neutral, benevolent institution or that gender inequality could be resolved by legal means (Hargreaves, 2010, p. 398). It is true that Elias did not participate in the decisive discussion initiated by a feminist author like Catherine MacKinnon (1989) on the gendered nature of the state and how male domination is exercised

through state law. But he has too often emphasised the “Janus face” of states and their ambivalent character, tolerating or fostering the development of a “double standard of civilisation,” especially but not only in international relations (Linklater, 2016), for his sociology to be seen as blind, naive or purely optimistic about the emancipatory power of “the state” in general for humanity as a whole. Since civilising and de-civilising processes often go hand in hand (Elias, 1996), an “advanced” state society can be profoundly *dys-civilised* (de Swaan, 1997), that is, it can leave certain groups and territories outside the civilisation process, or it can be civilising for some and at the same time de-civilising for others.

If Elias did not extensively explore this question in relation to women, that is to say, half of humanity, we have seen however that he tackles the topic, yet very briefly in his big book, by stressing that the significant political influence of high-ranked women developed at the margins of the state institutions in the salons, for a quite brief period and without threatening an overall absolutist and male dominating system. In his “Foreword to ‘Women Torn Two Ways’” (van Stolk & Wouters, 1983), Elias underlines the existing but limited effect of welfare state institutions such as homes of refuge for beaten women. He suggests that state structures and institutions are at the same time necessary but not predominant in social change, and he pauses on the issue of language, that is to say, a social structure which demonstrates “a peculiar power of resistance to unplanned innovations” (Elias, 2009, p. 274). It would take three generations in the best-case scenario for structural and mental changes to take place. Finally, “when in practice the balance of powers between the sexes begins to change, women not only have to fight against the dominant males, they also have to struggle with the male-dominated self-image within themselves.” They have to “struggle on two fronts.” Here, we can see that “the state” and state laws may appear of second importance, far from carrying alone or in themselves the promise of emancipating women, of ensuring (more) gender equality.

2.2.3 *On the Role and Place of Law*

If we now go back to Ancient Rome, it is important to stress that legal equality in marriage did not mean equality in other areas. For Elias, it did, quite simply, enable women to become *individuals*, not “equals” but “individuals.” Hence the depictions of independent, self-assured women that vanished with the invasions, the erosion of the monopoly of violence and the return to power of the “strongmen.” Customs relating to the

holding of property for women and free consent in marriage were nonetheless incorporated into Roman law, overriding the legal provisions in force in many contemporary societies. The Christian emperors then had to work hard to unravel what had been achieved and to strengthen the constraints on divorce. But they never made a pure and simple return to the stage that had preceded the advances made under the Republic (Elias, 1987, pp. 310–313). One reason for this was that both Roman and canon law had kept a record of it, helping—like Sophocles’s *Antigone*, Catullus’s *Claudia* and Appian of Alexandria’s *Hortensia*—to write in dotted lines the history of the transformations of the women condition.

Here, thus, Elias sketches out a rather unusual reflection on the role of law(s), customs and rights in the civilising process and the lessening of inequalities. The role of law is more generally little discussed by Elias (van Krieken, 2019, p. 268), both what is a legal norm and what is rule of law, despite the central, if implicit, character of law in the process of civilisation (Woodiwiss, 2005, p. 50). Therefore, it is interesting that law and rights have a more explicit place in some late texts (Elias, 1987, 2008, 2010a). Of course, it is very difficult to deny law a first rank place while focusing on Ancient Rome, a time when the importance of the law, in its full expansion, is inescapable and almost unparalleled. In his text, Elias probably still underestimates it. It can also be argued that it is more generally in relation to the development of the state that Elias considers the potential “emancipatory” role of law and rights, in this case for women. Nevertheless, the issue of law and rights appears here much more significant than anywhere else in the work to my knowledge.

Elias insists that marriage in republican Rome was still a private institution, an affair of clans, and that the Roman Republic actually did not have the institutional means to control marriages and divorces. Till late the “organisational techniques” and the “financial resources” were not enough developed for “bureaucratic tentacles to extend to marital sphere” (Elias, 1987, p. 295). He continues:

Thus, the change in the balance of power between husbands and wives which occurred in the development of Roman society was not in the first instance brought about by a deliberate change of legislation. It was in the first instance a change of custom indicating a wider change in the society at large. In fact, one might say that the change took place within the framework of the traditional legislation simply by re-interpreting it or by making a different use of old legal prescriptions and with a minimal additional legis-

lation so as to suit changing customs. With regard to their formal laws Roman were more conservative than with regard to their customs. (Elias, 1987, pp. 296–297)

Several points are interesting in this development which won't surprise a sociologist of law but are in Elias rather unusual. First, customs may change faster than the law, and changing customs can give existing law a role it has not until then. Second, the use of the expression "in the first instance" indicates that change in legislation did play a role even if a second one. If the possibility of marriage *sine conventione in manum mariti* appears the main legal tool which gave married women the ability of control over their own property, it is the change in custom that enabled men and women to choose it. This change would have not occurred without a "change in the structure of the Roman state," which could appear as real driving force but had to be relies to an even "wider change in the society at large." Only in the following some new laws, like one that allowed women to inherit property left to them, as well as change in the jurisprudence, accompanied the process.

The law will finally be recognised a specific role to explain the "considerable tenacity" of what have been accomplished under the late Republic. Elias points that "the custom had formed deep roots" by being eventually codified in the Roman law. With two aspects which played crucial role as preconditions of the egalitarian character of marriage, although first developed in social practice: first, the independence of women as well as husbands with regard to their own property; second, and "no less important," the voluntary character of the marriage association. Then, if the marriage *customs* of the Roman perished after the disintegration of the West Roman empire, "a code of Roman law survived" (Elias, 1987, p. 313), ready to be reused. It left its mark even on the law of the Church, which developed the doctrine that consensus of both the woman and the man was necessary to conclude a valid marriage. Admittedly, this point of doctrine appears to be particularly hypocritical and had no impact on containing the domination of the husband over the wife justified by the Christian tradition till our days. Nevertheless, it is no less significant that canon law in its early days did not backtrack on the idea of marriage as an act to which two individuals must theoretically consent.

As elsewhere, Elias seems in this text on marriage in Rome to be more interested in manners, affects and sensibilities than in norms, especially in the legal sense, let alone "values." He does devote a note to the concept

of “norm,” but mainly with the aim of restoring its constructed, practical and evolving dimensions (Elias, 1987, p. 316). What the sociologist suggests is that the integration of what is now considered a value or ideal—in this case, equality between men and women—into customs and habits is achieved not only *primarily* through laws and institutions but *also* through them, even if gradually and sometimes temporarily. Although Elias certainly does not confuse values and norms, he seems reluctant to study them distinctly, probably in line with his constant effort to avoid reifying concepts and reducing processes. Moreover, although distinct, both norms and values can be linked to the role of the state institutions and education. While it can be argued that “the state produces [legal] norms but not values” (Roy, 2018), state law can contribute to shaping future values by promoting new (social) norms on gender equality or violence prevention, including through the threat of criminal sanction.

In a text written few years before the text on Rome was published, Elias considered other particularly unequal relations, those between parents and children, or a group by definition outsider, the one of children. Elias pauses on the International Year of the Child proclaimed by the United Nations in 1979. According to him, this initiative, although symbolic, reveals the “recognition of this right of children, to have their particular identity as children respected and understood”: that is, “too, a human right,” although “new attempts to do justice to this right are accompanied by particular difficulties” (Elias, 2008, p. 15). What Elias is insisting on here is the considerable distance we have covered so far: “The Year of the Child symbolise[s] the fact that in today’s societies children, *despite their dependency*, are recognised as having, to a very high degree, their own unique character as particular group of members of this society” (Elias, 2008, p. 15, emphasis added). In a beautiful page, Elias quotes a contemporary poet, Gert Kalow: “I cry / half dead / the neighbours / rang / why / does this child cry / end / of the blows.” Elias concludes, maybe too optimistically for once:

[I]t is doubtful whether neighbours in earlier societies were always concerned when child cries. For a long time, too, state authorities had neither laws nor executive organs to mobilise in the protection of children. What would prevent adults from allowing children to die when they got on their nerves or when they had insufficient food to eat? I will refrain from listing all the other aspects of childhood which used to be possible, and which are no longer possible today. (Elias, 2008, p. 22)

By pointing on the secondary but consistent role of law or rights of diverse sources and epochs, evocatively in the text on children and the civilisation of parents, at length in the text on the changing balance of power between husbands and wives in Rome, Elias highlights what is recognised above all to women and children and of which they have long been deprived in their own society or figuration: an identity as individuals, be they members of outsiders' groups, and despite their high "dependency" in patriarchal or, to put it better, androcratic societies. It means that the transformation of law and the use of law appear here not only as a reflection or consequence of a changing balance of power but also, if neither a driving force nor a sufficient guarantee of social change, as a significant tool for strengthening a social change and keeping a trace of it.

2.3 *Changing Gender Balance of Power and "Changes in the 'We-I' Balance" [1987]*

The role of the law in recognising members of outsider groups as individuals in their own right is also linked to the third and final concern I wanted to address: the recognition or consideration, in the most neutral meaning, of persons (in their rights) as individuals and less and less as members of particular groups or categories, whatever these may be. Inevitably, this is linked to the way in which individuals and groups identify themselves and are identified by others, and thus to the delicate issue of identities and identification processes, which currently seem to be "in flux," particularly for women (Elias, 2014, p. 33). Charles Tilly, in his aforementioned book on durable inequalities, argues that feelings of identity, like intergroup hostility, play only a secondary part (Tilly, 1999, p. 15). In another text, however, the same Tilly points out the unescapable character of identity questions "Who am I?," "Who are we?," "Who are they?" and the socially negotiated and thus fluctuant and power-based character of identity narratives that aim at answering these questions (Tilly, 2003). Elias, on his part, does not seem to see issues of identity as driving principles for social change and the reduction of inequalities either. Resistant to change, identities are nevertheless affected by the changing balance of power that might be brought about by increased and more complex interdependence. As in the case of law, changes in identification processes and identity issues could thus play a more active role in the transformation of different types of inequalities but more often in a second time.

From different testimonies, it is said that Elias affirmed in the 1980s that “the greatest revolution in the history of Western societies was, in the course of the twentieth century, the accession of women to an identity of their own, no longer that of their father or husband” (Heinich, 2003, p. 83). This transformation, as we have seen, has a long, uneven and dotted-line history. From this standpoint, the changing balance of power between the sexes and transformations of gender relations have inevitably and profoundly affect (self-)identification processes of individuals as members of more or less established and outsider groups, and still do.

2.3.1 *Women and Men: Two Groups in a Changing Balance of Power*

In the Ancient Rome, we have seen that the relative emancipation of women had entailed not only the recognition of their own identity and personality but also the possibility for them to form women’s groups, which helped them to free themselves from their family and from their husband’s family above all. In the twentieth century, we can observe a similar two-sided transformation through the recognition of “women” as an ascending outsider group, and the will of (some) women to be recognised as persons as such and not to be identified by belonging to a group—in addition still often defined in biological terms—to which rights would be conditioned. More or less the same observation can be made about (members of) other outsider groups already mentioned: black and “non-white” people, migrants and non-citizens, members of cultural communities, and “sexual minorities”: not only “lesbian,” “gay,” “bisexual,” “transsexual,” “queer” (LGBTQ), but also “questioning,” “intersex,” “asexual,” “allies,” “pansexual” (in the longer US acronym “LGBTQQIAAP”). The open, unfinished character of such acronyms—illustrated by the use of the “+” in the French “LGBTQI+” or “O” in English for “other”—challenges indeed the very idea of assignment to a defined and closed category or community, while this is for some, and not only for conservative people and political movements, the very definition of “identity,” as something that by definition delimitates, unifies, and *does not change* (Delmotte, 2022b). This partly explains the divisions between feminists, and between different movements fighting for gender equality, but above all the violence of the reactions to some movements that radically question (gender) identity.

Since the 1960s, the development of gender studies and the developments of feminist and women’s studies have fully accompanied and nourished political struggles and debates. On the other hand, “recognition” or

the “struggle for recognition” (an expression forged by Axel Honneth in 1992) has become an important paradigm for decoding political conflicts in the late twentieth century. Feminist authors, at first rank among them Nancy Fraser (1995), contributed much to the discussion on its relevance. I cannot enter into these debates here, and there is no sense to excessively “update” the thought of a dead author, to “guess” what he would have thought. Let us simply point that Elias seems to be giving grist to different possible interpretations on the above-mentioned issue.

In a nutshell, humanity could be seen according to him as composed of two groups, different by their biological sex and, aside, by other evolutive social characteristics. Despite variations, one group is dominating, established, and the other outsider, dominated. There are other different ways of dividing humanity which are not less significant today: into “nations,” “ethnic” groups, “races” or “generations,” ... all of these groups or categories being social constructions, historically processed, all of these being linked by interdependence and power relations, all of them changing permanently even if slowly. However, considered through the lens of their relationships, these two “groups” of “men” and “women” or “male” and “female” have been at the same time particularly *unequal* in terms of power ratio for thousands of years, and incomparably more *dependent on each other*—or particularly, differently interdependent—than any other groups in a configuration of established and outsiders. And this for an evident, not to say “natural,” reason: “because no other groups of people are *biologically* made for each other” (Elias, 2009, p. 272) so as to ensure the biological reproduction and the survival of the human species. I emphasise the word *biologically* because this one, while it may shock the contemporary reader, actually imposes a strict restriction on the interpretation of the sentence, for Elias absolutely refused to reduce sociology to biology. Men and women have bodies as human beings or animals, but as groups of individuals whose relations are of interest to sociology, they are never reduced to their bodies, or therefore to their biological sex. In summary, human male-female relations have clearly been continuously transformed, although not in the same way in different contexts, periods and social strata. Over the long term, however, a relative reduction of power differential has occurred. At the twentieth century, in some figurations, a major sudden acceleration was observed, with risks and effects of backsliding (de Swaan, 2021).

The old-generation feminist Elisabeth Badinter speaks, like Elias, of a revolution: “one of the only revolutions of the history – and what a one,

of changing people relations – that has developed successfully. And that goes further with dignity. Without gulag, without camps” (Elisabeth Badinter on 30 November 2020 at the French television, my translation⁵). The judgement is a bit quick, and one might add, “but not without any violence,” especially towards women, but also towards men. It remains that, in terms of physical violence, the level of this last “revolution” is indeed particularly low against the men of the established groups. In addition, Elias agreed that “women’s problems are men’s problems and [that] men’s problems are women’s problems, seen from a different perspective and enacted with different and with changing power resources” (Elias, 2009, p. 273). No doubt he could have written—if he did not, but in other words he did—that “women’s freedom does not go without men’s freedom,” and conversely. All this suggests a first possible interpretation of Elias’s global thinking on gender. At first glance, a classical model of male-female figuration seems to frame issues of gender domination and the changing balance of power between the sexes, and issues of identity.

2.3.2 *A Society of Individuals*

Elias’s sociology does not, however, imply a view of human societies as primarily composed of two distinct and rather fixed unequal groups, though increasingly equal (or less unequal), and/or which Elias would clearly like to see develop as such. First, as I already noticed, social groups *are not* biological subgroups and conversely. Furthermore, the entire work of Elias aims at showing that humans are “biologically forced into indeterminacy,” that the only “universal” of human society is the “humankind’s natural changeability,” thus a social, not a biological, constant (Elias, 2006, pp. 99–105). Second, for this very reason, all “identities,” identification and self-identification phenomena are socio-historically processed and never given by nature, however resilient “second natures” may appear (Delmotte, 2022b). Third, long-term trends of “changes in the ‘We-I’ balance” (Elias, 2010a) tend to give precedence to the “I” (the I-identity) over the “we” (we- or group identities), or to give more importance to the “I” in the identification of the self and of others in contemporary societies. The developments of law and rights, more specifically of human rights, attest to this. For Elias, human rights and human rights claims in the

⁵ See the interview available online at <https://www.tfl.fr/tmc/quotidien-avec-yann-barthes/videos/invitee-la-masterclass-delisabeth-badinter-42350942.html>.

second half of the twentieth century correspond both to a new upsurge of integration, in the direction of humanity, *and* to a “new upsurge of individualisation.” The extension of human rights and of struggles carried out in their name tends to prove that “the individual as such, as a member of humanity, is entitled to rights that limit the state’s power over the individual” (Elias, 2010a, pp. 207–208; Delmotte & Damay, 2021).

In the same important text, written in 1986–1987, Elias (2010a) shows that more and more globalised interdependencies profoundly affect in a way or another the processes of identification of individuals with the groups to which they “belong” or to which they are supposed to belong. Why should this not also be the case for sex- and gender-based identities in the age of transgender people, and when bisexuality, to begin with, and not only homosexuality, seem to be more tolerated in larger social strata, at least in certain contexts?

Deceased in 1990, Elias did not witness most of the recent changes and innovations related to gender and sexuality and, again, it does not make sense to “guess” what he would have thought about our more gender-fluid age. However, his comprehensive and historical-sociological approach to the civilising processes enlightens in a specific manner and from several angles the transformations of gender relations, their causes, meanings and consequences until our days. Among other things, scientific and medical advances in sexuality and procreation, and changes in attitudes towards sexuality and parenting more broadly, stem from and contribute to changes in gender relations and in the gender balance of power. In very last fragments, Elias (2014, pp. 32–36) underlines the major impact of the invention of contraceptive pills in the second half of the twentieth century. Since then, assisted reproduction, homoparenting and gender reassignment have influenced the way in which more and more people, again in certain contexts, perceive and identify themselves, that is, less and less as women or men by nature, and more and more as individuals, who consider it less and less “normal” or “natural” to be (exclusively) attracted to members of the “other sex” and to reproduce for the survival of the human group. Psychologists have long recognised the non-binary character of sexual preferences, and biologists have more recently established the continuum rather than opposition character of the criteria establishing the differences between male and female traits (see “US proposal for defining gender has no basis in science” in the journal *Nature*, 2018). Among

other factors, these discoveries and new ways of thinking raise or follow doubts about the durability of sexual identities that have long been considered and imposed as given by nature to justify multiple forms of domination.

3 CONCLUSION: AN OLD MAN FEMINIST SOCIOLOGIST?

One of the very last texts we have from Elias is based on what he dictated for hours to several assistants shortly before his death as he was blind during his last years. In “Freud’s Concept of Society and Beyond it” (Elias, 2014), Elias comes back to his great debt to Freud and to the main criticisms he nevertheless wants to address to him. Women are the secondary subject of this text, more exactly young women and their unprecedented emancipation in the twentieth century. Elias evokes three immediate factors of it: enlarged access to intellectual formation and universities, expansion of the labour market and of state activities and, as already said, the invention of contraceptive pills, which is not only associated to women’s “liberation” but to its impact on sexuality, on freedom of both women and men and on relations between them:

Society, for a long time rather repressive in matters of female sexuality and in some respects also of the sexual conduct of young males, itself produced a liberating remedy. It is too early to assess the full consequences of this change. As far as one can see, it occurred without any major disturbance of the order of society or, for that matter, of the order of nature. (Elias, 2014, p. 32)

Below, Elias argues that it is a major issue of civilisation:

In itself, neither the increase nor the relaxation of constraints constitutes a determining criterion: both can have a civilising function, but it is not necessarily so. The question is whether, in total, the new regime allows boys and girls, men and women, to live in a more decent and enjoyable way than under the earlier regime. I tend to think that that is the case. I would not be far from reckoning that the key element is that young women are now deciding their own lives to an extent that they never did in the past. (Elias, 2014, p. 36)

Elias definitely had no time, aged 90 years old, to achieve his developments on such a complex affair (Joly apud Elias, 2010b, p. 155). He did

not really witness AIDS years and the (relative) questioning of the (also relative) sexual liberation of the 1960s and 1970s, not to mention its condemnation by religious radicalisms and, more recently, by illiberal and anti-egalitarian policies. It remains significant that, beside an ultimate elucidation of his relation to Freud, Elias gave gender issues, (young) women and their sexuality, an ultimately prominent place. About his time, he wrote in the same text: “Greater equality between men and women, a more even distribution of power chances between them, made it necessary for both groups to treat each other with greater circumspection. It required greater self-restraint on the part of both. It represented a very pronounced civilising spurt” (Elias, 2014, pp. 33–34). That does not mean a definitive or non-ambiguous progress.

Many things changed for women in different fields since the 1990s. However, the report on “Gender-related killings of women and girls,” published in November 2022 by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2022), hardly gives reason to rejoice, apart that such report exists. The key findings point that the overall number of female homicides has remained largely unchanged over the past decade, that most killings of women and girls are gender motivated, and that women and girls are disproportionately affected by homicidal violence in the private sphere. In March 2023, UN’s Commission on Women opens amid “vanishing progress on rights,” in countries like Afghanistan, where “women and girls have been erased from the public life,” but also in the richest countries, where sexual and reproductive rights are under attack. In his declaration, the UN general secretary Antonio Guterres affirmed that “gender equality is growing more distant” and “still 300 years away,” basing on data produced by UN Women.⁶

In 2021, it was still possible to teach Prehistory in Belgium, Europe, to a class of eight- to nine-year-old children without once using the word “women” and using 37 times the word “men” and “man” with or without capital letters, as if there were absolutely no women or girls in Prehistory. It was the same in 2023, about the origins of jazz music: just like there were no slave women singing blues. At the global level, there is no shortage of evidence of the dramatic persistence of inequality between men and women, the persistence of male domination on women and the persistence of most severe gender-based discrimination. In everyday life, examples abound of more subtle discrimination, intentional or not, but which

⁶<https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/03/1134207>.

still demonstrate the strong resistance of (“traditional” and conservative) ways of thinking, speaking and feeling to move towards more equality, and to become simply more reality congruent. So, more than ever we can say, with Holbach and Elias (2012, p. 490): “the process of civilisation is under way,” *la civilisation n’est pas encore terminée*—and there is still a lot to do.

Many possible connections between Elias’s historical sociology and feminist approaches, in the social sciences and law, in the arts and literature too, remain to be explored. What I tried to do is to show that Elias’s work is based on significant insights and a remarkable sensibility for a sociologist born in 1897. This sensibility, a simple way of saying things and depicting the problems of individuals and groups, can be interpreted as a true open-mindedness that has something to do with Elias’s trajectory and reflexivity. All this contributes to keep his sociology alive and useful for a better understanding of unresolved but transforming gender problems and inequalities today.

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Civilising Campaigns in Times of Informalisation: Fear of Moralising in Dutch Street Harassment Awareness-Raising

Mischa J. T. Dekker

I INTRODUCTION

Building on the work of Norbert Elias, Cas Wouters (2004, 2007) shows how, after a process of moral formalisation that occurred from the sixteenth century onwards characterised by a fairly strict self-regulation of emotions and impulses, during the twentieth century European societies went through an increase in emotional alternatives and a moral “informalisation.” This historical development corresponded to a narrowing of power inequalities between people in many sectors of society—part of the process that Elias (2000) calls “functional democratisation.” This process was powered notably by the emancipation struggles of ethnic minorities,

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LGBTQI+ people, and women. According to informalisation theory, when power balances became more equal, this produced a “controlled decontrolling” of behaviour. People were encouraged to express their individuality more fully, and previously “dangerous” emotions such as fear and sexual desire were increasingly emancipated.

While numerous studies analyse informalisation in both the private and professional sphere (García, 2018; Hughes, 2010; Wouters & Mennell, 2015; see also Wouters in this volume), how this process informs actors invested in “civilising campaigns”—that is, attempts to influence the behaviour and morals of individuals—remains relatively understudied.¹ This chapter explores civilising campaigns in times of informalisation based on a case study of awareness-raising on street harassment in the Netherlands. I argue that the process of informalisation has imbued people with fear of “moralising” others. Functional democratisation produces pressure on people to refrain from “paternalistically” imposing their norms or worldviews on others.

Following the increased media attention for street harassment in the 2010s, various initiatives are currently emerging to raise awareness about this issue through education and governmental campaigns (Fileborn & O’Neill, 2023; Dekker, 2025b). In many countries, street harassment awareness raising was primarily implemented by organisations employing a feminist approach to street harassment as a product of male dominance—for instance, in the United States (Right To Be, 2023), the United Kingdom (Vera-Gray & Bullough, 2017), and France (Dekker, 2019). However, in the Netherlands, a country often cited as a precursor in implementing policies on gender-based violence (Henig, 2002, p. 30) and sexuality education (Naezer et al., 2017), feminist vocabularies of male dominance and sexism were mostly absent from governmental awareness campaigns and major state-subsidised education programmes addressing street harassment in the period 2015–2020.

During our interviews, Dutch policymakers and professionals indicated they eschewed feminist vocabularies centred on gender-based violence and oppression, which confront men and boys with their position in patriarchal society and raises awareness among women and girls about the fact that they may be victim of specific types of violence because of their gender. When explaining why they avoided vocabularies pertaining to male domination, a recurring theme was their fear of being perceived as “moralistic.”

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What explains this concern about “moralising” among Dutch policy-makers and educators? And why was the language of victims and perpetrators and a feminist approach linking street harassment to sexism and gender inequality relatively marginal in Dutch policy and awareness-raising? I argue that the notion of “informalisation,” a specific period in the civilising process as described by Norbert Elias (2000, 2010), is useful to understand these concerns. Looking at the Netherlands, two specific dimensions of this process of informalisation can be distinguished that encouraged awareness-raising that avoids “moralising.” First, I show how professionals’ fear of moralising reflected their moral sensibilities about gender. My analysis builds on scholarship on the relationship between informalisation and individualism (or even narcissism) (Castel, 2021; Kilminster, 2008) in showing how fear of moralising was a concern for people’s individuality and autonomy. Second, it reflected their moral sensibilities about race. I show how this fear sprang from a desire to be attentive to diversity in ethno-racial and cultural group identities.

By situating the emergence of trainings and policies that try to avoid “moralising” in a process of changing forms of civilising campaigns—in this case concerning street harassment—I contribute to figurational analyses of changing tendencies in how societies deal with gender and the policies they implement to combat gender inequality (De Swaan, 2019; Delmotte, 2022; Ernst, 1996). I argue that the notion of informalisation is useful not only to understand the changing dynamics of gender relations but also to explain the choices professionals make in organising initiatives to raise awareness on gender-based violence. In doing so, the chapter analyses how the practical rationalities of individuals are informed by ideals they internalise through processes of transformation of the Dutch state. This approach is grounded in recent scholarship at the intersection of pragmatic sociology and figurational sociology (Barthe et al., 2013, pp. 183–184; Heurtin & Trom, 1997; Lemieux, 2000, p. 26; Moreau de Bellaing & Trom, 2022; Trom, 2003).

The first section shows how people working on street harassment awareness-raising initiatives for Dutch governmental and non-governmental organisations avoided feminist vocabularies because they were afraid to “moralise.”² To delve into the origins of this fear of moralising, the second section situates these policies in relation to the politicisation of street harassment and to more general historical processes in the Netherlands. This discussion illustrates the liberal turn the informalisation process has

²This overview is based on research conducted for my PhD dissertation on the politicisation of street harassment in France and the Netherlands.

taken here. In the conclusion, I briefly remark on various tensions that are characteristic of civilising campaigns in times of informalisation—that is, attempts to raise awareness without “moralising.”

2 FEAR OF MORALISING AMONG DUTCH EDUCATORS AND POLICYMAKERS

Since 2017, the City of Amsterdam has produced multiple campaigns on street harassment that did not denounce it as a form of gender-based violence but promoted discussion about differences in personal boundaries (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2017, 2020a). The Project Leader Street Harassment at the municipality argued during our interview that it is more effective to incite discussion instead of “pointing fingers.” For him, this was especially so for a topic regarding which opinions diverge and about which there is still much debate.

What works is influencing, not hard prohibition....The average inhabitant of Amsterdam doesn’t easily accept something from the government on a topic like this—like about throwing your rubbish in the bin....There is much fear of being paternalist [*betutteling*]. It’s a problem reported in the media, but many people think it is paternalist: No alcohol in your boat. If you can’t whistle anymore, what can you still do as a white heterosexual? The municipality shouldn’t completely go along with that, but it does play a role.

During a Sounding Board meeting on 28 September 2017, a communication advisor working for the City of Amsterdam explained why the municipality decided to remove many elements presenting street harassment as a structural problem of male domination: “Men found the banners moralising, which we solved by asking more open questions and being less normative.” Public officials explained that trying to avoid a moralising tone and approaching the topic from a “positive” angle followed a general tendency in how the City of Amsterdam developed awareness campaigns in recent years (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020b).³

³A 2019 campaign, for instance, consisted of posters in which residents gave personal reasons for no longer using natural gas: “I’m getting off gas because it’s getting more expensive. And you?”; “I’m getting off gas because I’m in solidarity with Groningen. And you?” The campaign website stated: “we are not trying to fool [*wijsmaken*] the residents of Amsterdam but let them come up themselves with reasons to get off natural gas” (Branding a Better World, 2019).

While local and national governments in many countries implemented high school trainings employing a feminist approach that considered street harassment as a product of male dominance, this was not the case in the Netherlands. The approach of Qpido (2017, 2018), an organisation specialised in transgressive behaviour among youth, is a case in point. Members of the organisation indicated that in their “*Liefde is...*” [“Love is...”] trainings, which were organised in all high schools in Amsterdam and several surrounding cities, they wanted to avoid an explicitly feminist approach that focused on violence and oppression. Qpido’s approach differed from that which was dominant in, for example France, where most organisations employed a feminist approach. French trainers focused on trying to convince girls that they may have been victims of this act of gender-based violence, while they confronted boys with the effects of sexist behaviour for girls (Dekker, 2019). Qpido educators, on the other hand, sought to co-formulate collective norms together with pupils and help them develop “interaction skills” that would enable them to “flirt” in a more pleasant way. When I interviewed the founder of Qpido, she stated that an emphasis on men as perpetrators and women as victims “does not fit with our times....You have to change something in men without just pointing the finger.” A project leader for Qpido explained in our interview that in order to co-construct norms, the trainers sought to provoke discussion among boys on what they found acceptable:

The most important thing with the boys is to decide on norms together. We’re not steering them—well, we might steer, but we’re not going to impose an opinion. Using different tools, we try to bring the boys to some insights, to a common norm: what do we find OK? How do we relate to each other? What is respect? How do we behave towards women?...When they go out on the street later that week, they might think about that, when they’re in a group, what could you do differently in approaching girls.

Going into a class and telling the boys that their behaviour fits within a pattern of male domination would, for these trainers, not only be moralising and provoke animosity from the boys but also fail to give them the necessary tools to positively change their behaviour. Rather, they found it important to help boys develop specific interactional competencies, to become, as stated in the official guidelines for the trainings, “perfect seducers,” who do not transgress girls’ personal boundaries—whether on purpose or by accident.

3 SITUATING APPREHENSION OF MORALISING IN THE PROCESS OF INFORMALISATION

The approach of the City of Amsterdam and of organisations like Qpido represents a shift relative to the more confrontational and structure-oriented feminist approaches that characterised Dutch governmental and civil society work on sexual violence in the 1980s. Comparative reports highlight how, in the late 1980s, the Netherlands was among the European countries with the strongest institutionalisation of feminism (Henig, 2002, p. 30) and of a gender-based approach to interpersonal violence in policy and civil society (Roggeband, 2012, p. 784). Forty years later, however, the status of this early mover has shifted, as feminist approaches gave way to more gender-neutral ways of addressing sexual violence (Wekker, 2017, pp. 163–164). This shift illustrates how a policy focus on structural gender inequality and sexism is not essentially un-Dutch. Rather, different ways of understanding and addressing social problems are more or less dominant at different points in time.

To understand the origins of this fear of moralising, common among Dutch policymakers and educators, I trace how over the last decades they became central concerns in Dutch policy and debate on women's and LGBTQI+ rights. I do so through the angle of figurational sociology, by situating these changes in a process of changing moral and emotional sensibilities. The aim of this chapter is not only to analyse how actors in the present mobilise the past to justify their actions. It is also to seize the historical movement that the politicisation of street harassment is part of, and to which it contributes (Moreau de Bellaing & Trom, 2022).

4 VALORISING INDIVIDUAL AUTONOMY: THE LIBERAL ORIENTATION OF THE DUTCH INFORMALISATION PROCESS

The Netherlands, where they don't even notice when you try to bring the revolution closer to home. Where the authorities pat you on the back for pulling the rug underneath them.⁴—Anja Meulenbelt (*De schaamte voorbij*, 1976, p. 289)

In *The Civilising Process* (2000) and *The Society of Individuals* (2010), Elias traces how, throughout Europe, people have become increasingly

⁴ My translation, original in Dutch: “Nederland, waar ze het niet eens merken als je probeert de revolutie dichterbij huis te halen. Waar je door de autoriteiten over je bol wordt genaaid voor je poging de poten onder hun stoel weg te zagen.”

intolerant of an expanding variety of acts conceived of as violence. Initially, people were protected from infringements on their autonomy mostly through laws and other types of sanctions on physical violence. Over time, the definition of violence broadened from physical to verbal acts—for instance, racism, sexism, and homophobia—to limiting people in the expression of their individuality (Wouters, 2004, 2007). People were pressured by those around them to develop increasingly encompassing forms of self-regulation and reflexivity to refrain from infringing on other people's autonomy. Changing power balances and the emancipation of various groups (i.e. women, LGBTQI+ people, racialised people) led other groups (i.e. men, white people) to develop forms of reflexivity towards the emancipating groups.

While in earlier centuries relations between women and men tended to be strongly codified and restricted, the Sexual Revolution of the 1960s loosened up norms regulating sexuality. Emancipation movements fighting for the rights of women, LGBTQI+ people, and racialised people shook up the strict norms that often worked in the interest of white men. While the process of formalisation up until the late nineteenth century protected people from violence through strict rules and prohibitions, the imposition of prohibitions came to be experienced as a form of violence in itself. A shift occurred in dominant personality structures: from an authoritative second nature to a less authoritative conscience—a third nature. Beyond the need to protect people from bodily harm, there was increased pressure on people to allow others to develop their individuality without paternalistically imposing worldviews on them (Kilminster, 2008). This “controlled decontrolling” brought more space for a diversity in behavioural alternatives—making it more acceptable to express emotions such as anger and sexual desire. At the same time, demands for self-constraint increased, as people were expected to be tolerant in an increasingly diverse social environment and to respect others' consent (Wouters, 1999).

These processes shape people's moral sensibilities at every level of social life, including how policymakers and educators organise efforts to raise awareness on social problems including gender-based violence. Looking specifically at policymaking on sexual violence, we observe how this process reflected in an increasing concern about personal autonomy and individuality.

As in many other countries, violence against women became an object of Dutch feminist activism in the 1970s. In this period, the focus of

feminist movements shifted from sexual liberation to sexual oppression. As the “women’s movement turned against sexual violence, attention shifted from differences between the generations to differences between the sexes. Opposition to the sexual practices and morality of older generations diminished, while opposition to those of the dominant sex gained momentum” (Wouters, 1999, p. 192; Van Daalen & Van Stolk, 1991). For Schnabel, it was the greater sexual openness about sexuality that brought sexual abuse into sight (1990, p. 16).

In the early 1980s, the Netherlands was among the first European countries to develop policies that specifically addressed violence against women from a gender-based perspective (Roggeband, 2012, p. 784). The Council of Chief Commissioners set up a National Network Domestic Violence, and the Dutch government started funding “Blijf van m’n lijf” (“Don’t touch my body”) shelters for victims of domestic violence in 1976 (Roggeband, 2002). Henig (2002, p. 30) argues that the early appointment of state feminists was key to providing the Netherlands with what she argues is the most extensive sex equality apparatus in Europe. The first policy plan was published in 1984, proposing multiple awareness-raising campaigns, police trainings, and increased funding for sex-specific victim care services. Through this document, the government institutionalised the claim of the feminist movement that sexual violence is rooted in and maintains unequal power relations between women and men (MinSZW, 1984, p. 8).

Following the strong institutionalisation of feminism in the 1980s, the Netherlands continued to be a first mover on many sexuality issues in the 1990s and 2000s: in 2000, it was the first country in the world to legalise same-sex marriage and among the first to ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (Buijs et al., 2011). Dutch organisations were at the forefront of work on LGBTQI+-rights internationally (Kollman, 2017). But in this period, many governmental and non-governmental organisations shifted from structuralist to more individualist approaches that decoupled violence from gender inequality. The term “violence against women” gradually went out of circulation in policy documents, aid services, and research (Roggeband, 2012, p. 791; Tjen-A-Tak & Van den Broek, 2014, p. 45). The causes of this shift were multiple and complex, and both the result of processes that were specific to work on interpersonal violence as well as changes in Dutch society beyond this issue. I will focus here on how this shift is related to apprehension of moralising among policymakers and organisations.

One cause of this turn away from a focus on structural gender inequalities was the increasing involvement of right-wing liberal parties—notably the VVD⁵—in policies on sexual violence and gender inequality. While up until the 1980s the Dutch right was mostly silent on the issue of gender-based violence or actively opposed feminist mobilisations, various right-wing parties shifted away from this relativist and passive position relatively quickly. Parties such as the VVD and Leefbaar Rotterdam pushed for policies on sexual violence, but through more individualist and less explicitly gender-based approaches than previously employed by feminist organisations. Emancipation became increasingly perceived less as a collective struggle than as an individual choice (Wekker, 2017, pp. 163–164).⁶ Liberal policies drawing back the state, favouring privatisation, and emphasising individual responsibility led to cutbacks in funding for women's shelters and other sex-specific services, forcing many organisations to close down (Bureau Clara Wichman, 2020; Roggeband, 2012, p. 791). Gender mainstreaming may have the effect of creating coalitions on an issue but may also lead to fragmentation and dilution of the initial approach, although this is not a necessary result. State responsiveness creates a risk of co-optation (Ferree et al., 2002; Stratigaki, 2004). Gender mainstreaming led more actors to work on sexual and gender-based violence—not only feminist organisations but also police, legal actors, youth care, neighbourhood organisations, health-care services, and psychiatrists—the feminist and gender-based vocabularies and approaches that initially prevailed in many of these services gradually watered down.

Fear of moralising by reducing people to a specific status was one of the factors at the centre of this shift. Many policy documents in this period called for a move away from the woman-victim/man-perpetrator dichotomy and recognise the diversity of violence situations. It is on this point that not only the right but also left-wing politicians and organisations contributed to the neutralisation and individualisation of policies on sexual violence. In the 1990s, three other groups became more central to policies and debates on sexual violence: men, racialised women, and LGBTIQ+ people.

The national policy plans of 1990 and 1999 attest to increasing attention for perpetrators, notably through punitive measures proposed by the

⁵ People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, founded in 1948.

⁶ Moreover, the initiatives of these parties mostly focused on perpetrators with an ethnic minority background.

VVD and other right-wing parties. Their framing of domestic violence as primarily a criminal issue coincided, as in other contexts (Matthews, 1994), with the redirection of financing from women's organisations to police and security services. But the increasing attention for perpetrators was not only punitive in character. In the 1990s, there was also an upsurge in care facilities for men, both as victims and as perpetrators of sexual violence. This was a radical shift relative to the previous focus of organisations on women (and children) as victims, while men were almost exclusively considered as perpetrators and rarely included in their work. In 2004, the first "Blijf van m'n lijf" house for men was opened in Rotterdam. In 2008, there was a pilot programme for shelters for battered man in the four big cities—Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht—which was prolonged in 2012.

LGBTQI+ people were also increasingly incorporated in policies and social work on violence, notably because of the strong institutional role of the COC,⁷ the largest Dutch LGBTQI+-rights organisation. Criticisms of "white feminism" by racialised scholars and activists led to more attention for cultural specificities of forms of violence and the need to rethink the relationship towards men in shelters for battered women, to which I will come back below.

Increasing attention for male victims, racialised people, and LGBTQI+ people led many services to replace the term "*Vrouwenhulpverlening*" (women's services) by "*Diversiteitsbewuste hulpverlening*" (diversity-aware services) and "violence against women" by "gender-related violence" (Roggeband & Verloo, 2007, p. 275).⁸ For instance, the Oranje houses founded in 2009 adopted a diversity-oriented approach. The colour orange referred to the target group: people who are between green (no violence) and red (life threatening), signifying that the focus was no longer on a group (women) but on a status (of being in a violent situation). Diversification of target groups created dissatisfaction with the "essentialist" "victim/perpetrator" dichotomy, which according to many social workers made it difficult to account for the complicated dynamics of

⁷ Center for Culture and Leisure, founded in Amsterdam in 1946.

⁸ Delage shows similarly how, in Los Angeles, the diversification of populations taken in by shelters for victims of domestic violence contributed to the de-legitimation of a feminist conception of this problem (2017, p. 223).

violence situations. Many professionals expressed uneasiness about pushing their public into roles that they did not feel comfortable with. Instead of speaking of “victims” and “perpetrators,” many shelters came to favour the more open expression “people in a violence situation” (Tjen-A-Tak & Van den Broek, 2014). In addition to this shift from the victim/aggressor distinction to a more situational paradigm, many services put more focus on pleasure: on sexual pleasure, masturbation, and how to discuss one’s sex life with one’s partner(s).

Apprehension of being aggressive, polarising, and imposing ideological viewpoints may seem typical for the Netherlands in that it corresponds to the history of “polder politics” which seeks for cooperation, consensus, and pragmatic solutions. But instead of alluding to essential characteristics of Dutch culture, the elements above show how increasing apprehension of moralising was the result of a historical process. The feminist movement lost in strength and governmental influence, but it also changed internally: shifting from a structuralist approach to “violence against women” to more individualised and diversity-oriented work.

Although this turn away from structure-based approaches led to budget cuts for work on gender-based violence, it also constituted a form of reflexivity: Dutch municipalities creating campaigns on street harassment and trainers of the organisation Qpido emphasised that for them it was important to allow people to decide for themselves how they experienced certain acts and avoid imposing an ideology that essentialises women and men into the roles of passive victims and potential aggressors (Dekker, 2023). This led them to privilege “nonconfrontational” approaches.

5 APPREHENSION AND FEAR OF STIGMATISING

Apprehension of moralising by pushing people into roles was not only the effect of concerns about gender. For Dutch educators and policymakers, it also often involved a cultural dimension. In a multicultural society in which diverse norms about what constitutes street harassment exist, public officials in Amsterdam said, they wanted to be careful of imposing a single norm regarding how people should behave. Apprehension of reproducing stigmas about racialised men as perpetrators of sexual violence created hesitation among Dutch feminists and left-wing politicians to work on street harassment. This illustrates how apprehension of reproducing

stigmas (Dekker, 2025a) can be a source of political disengagement. Actors involved in the implementation of awareness campaigns and high school training programs often spoke about the difficulty of defining harassment in a society with a variety of cultural norms on what is acceptable behaviour or not. How did apprehension of reproducing stigmas come to preoccupy so many actors in the Netherlands, and why was it often formulated in a multiculturalist vocabulary of normative diversity and tolerance?

Over the last 30 years, Dutch anti-racist and feminist activists, scholars, and state actors contributed to the increase of apprehension of stigmatising racialised men. Stigmatisation is about being stereotyped as being of a low status (Lamont et al., 2017, pp. 6–7), being “reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one” (Goffman, 1963, p. 3). This apprehension is fed by the history of colonialism, slavery, the holocaust—*hantises* of a racist past that plague our collective memory (Stavo-Debaugé, 2012). Sometimes, apprehension of reproducing stigmas is expressed in terms of a negative liberty: that of not being confronted with racist or stigmatising acts. Such a negative conception is especially prevalent among French “universalists.” In the Netherlands, we find not only this negative conception of concerns about stigmatisation but also a positive one: the right to belong to a community with its own values and traditions. Apprehension of reproducing stigmas tends to encourage actors to individualise blame: to consider aggressors not as members of a group (e.g. men with specific cultural backgrounds) but as individuals.

Apprehension about stigmatising is central to the process of informalisation. This process consists of a relaxation of external and internal constraints, allowing people to more easily express emotions which were previously considered dangerous or shameful. But this emancipation of emotions goes together with a “trend of increasing social controls towards restricting and avoiding expression of feelings of superiority and inferiority, whether pertaining to manners between people of different social class, age or gender” (Wouters, 1998, 2004, pp. 4–5). As we saw above, the restraint on feelings of superiority expressed itself through uneasiness about imposing worldviews on others. Pressure to restrain feelings of superiority is also about apprehension of reproducing stigmas. Wouters (1998) shows how the emancipation struggles of different groups—women, racialised people, LGBTQI+ individuals—led people to be more

reflective about their feelings of superiority and inferiority.⁹ Thus, informalisation does not imply auto-constraints disappeared or even diminished. Pressure to restrain feelings of superiority and be tolerant towards the diversity of lifestyles and behavioural codes that exist in multicultural societies was produced notably by racialised women and anti-racism movements, and through the gradual emancipation of racialised people in French and Dutch society. Exposure to previously unknown levels of social mixture—at work, in school, in public transportation—led people to develop a stronger self-control and ability to endure provocations. Ideals of good manners became independent of distinctions in social rank, and “expressing social and psychic distance had to be done in relatively cautious and concealed ways” (Wouters, 2007, p. 5).

The specific way in which this fear of reproducing stigmas was expressed by Dutch professionals working on street harassment was shaped by its history of multiculturalism. Dutch multiculturalism has its roots in the history of pillarisation that consolidated in the nineteenth century: to enable tolerance between groups with different beliefs—notably protestant, catholic, and socialist—policies were oriented at allowing each group to have its own state-subsidised institutions. This ideology of a society organised in “pillars” guided the integration of new minorities, such as post-colonial migrants from Indonesia between 1945 and the 1960s and labour migrants from Morocco and Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s. To allow ethnic groups to preserve their own culture and cohesion, they could ask for governmental aid to create their own sociocultural organisations, religious institutions, schools, and media (Wekker, 2017, p. 87). “Ethnic Minority Policy” was applied to many other groups during the 1980s (Vermeulen & Penninx, 2000, p. 20), incorporating “minority elites into the policy process” (Koopmans & Statham, 2003, p. 221). The ideology of multiculturalism was based on the idea that cohabitation between groups is possible, and that its success depends on each having its own institutions valorising its group identity.

⁹ Several scholars, notably anthropologist Duerr, denounce Elias’ notion of a “civilising process” as a political myth that serves as a justification for “occidental” feelings of superiority towards “non-occidental cultures.” In response, sociologists in the Eliasian tradition point out that—in addition to this process not being restricted to “occidental” countries—the prevalence of discomfort about the notion of evolution attests to the existence of that evolution: of a civilising process which made the expression of feelings of superiority increasingly embarrassing (Linhardt, 2001).

Questions about diversity and stigmatisation in work on sexual violence were often raised through this multiculturalist vocabulary. Although apprehension of stigmatising was not new, it intensified with criticisms of the universalist pretensions of “white” second wave feminism in the 1980s and 1990s. The Netherlands developed a strong “zmv” (black, migrant, and refugee women) movement, notably among women with an Antillean, Indonesian, Surinamese, Moluccan, Turkish, and Moroccan migration background. In the 1990s, the issue of zmv-women became more central to work on sexual violence. The zmv-women movement criticised *Blijf van m’n lijf* houses for being too white, and many started to diversify staff and oblige them to attend “interculturalisation trajectories” to learn about cultural differences (Tjen-A-Tak & Van den Broek, 2014, p. 36). A diversity approach became popular in activism and policy.

Apprehension of reproducing stigmas is fundamentally reactive. Policymakers working on sexual violence often expressed it in response to those who mobilised racialised discourses on sexual freedom, women’s emancipation, and gay rights—which were arguably more central to Dutch immigration debates than anywhere else (Mepschen et al., 2010, p. 963). When far-right politician Pim Fortuyn rose in the early 2000s with a programme on the need to stop looking away and “name” the misogyny prevalent among Dutch Muslims, many accused him of using feminism for racist ends. In the work of policymakers and educators, concerns about valorising individuality and about recognising diversity combined to produce apprehensions about moralising. They expressed apprehension about stigmatising marginalised groups by employing approaches that speak primarily from the experience of one group (i.e. upper-middle-class, white women). For many people, valorising individuals’ autonomy came to imply not only protecting victims against violence but also refraining from reproducing stigmas about demographics of men.

6 CONCLUSION

Fear of moralising is both a moral and an emotional sensibility. The concept of informalisation allows us to seize some of the sources of this apprehension and understand the changing form given to awareness-raising campaigns on gender inequality. In much sociological research, the changes in Dutch policy on sexual violence in the 1990s and 2000s are mainly conceived as a loss of reflexivity: the waning influence of the feminist movement and the introduction of more individualistic policies that

led to a loss of attention to structural gender inequality (Roggeband, 2012, p. 791; Wekker, 2017, p. 163). Without denying that reflexivity about structural gender inequalities declined in the work of some of these organisations, analysing this process through the angle of fear of moralising sheds additional light on it. Situating this development in the civilising process described by Elias allows us to see it also as a moment of production of collective reflexivity (Barthe et al., 2013) about the tensions and risks involved in raising awareness on sexual violence. With the informalisation process a view of autonomy spread that implied not only protecting victims against violence but also refraining from moralising and stigmatising. The effects of the informalisation process on civilising campaigns pertaining to gender inequality is reflected in a dual imperative: paying attention to individual feelings and to the diversity of group identities. Concerns about individual autonomy and about stigmatisation reinforced each other in producing a fear of moralising among educators and policymakers.

First, this fear concerned moral sensibilities about gender. Concerns about moralising stemmed from the importance Dutch educators and policymakers attached to people's individuality, a theme that was more central in awareness campaigns and educational sessions on street harassment than structural gender inequalities. This relates to a development that began in the 1990s, when Dutch policy on sexual violence gradually turned away from approaches taking structural gender inequalities as their starting point (Roggeband, 2012, p. 791; Tjen-A-Tak & Van den Broek, 2014, p. 45; Wekker, 2017, p. 163). Under the influence of liberal parties, many organisations and policymakers traded the previously dominant structuralist approaches for more individualist approaches that decoupled violence from gender inequality (for similar observations on the effects of liberal politics and market forces on sexual violence policy, see: Delage, 2017, pp. 192–223). Fear of moralising is part of this process of individualisation: structural approaches were increasingly seen as “moralistic” and organisations valorised individuality. Understanding this apprehension of “moralising” thus contributes to research on resistance to (Ikävalko & Kantola, 2017) and decline of (Epstein, 2002) feminism. We may thus characterise the Dutch informalisation process as one that took a particularly liberal turn, an orientation reflected in how educators and policymakers raised awareness on street harassment. They preferred approaches that focus on people's individual feelings and teaching “interaction skills,” rather than redefining their experiences in light of structural gender inequalities.

Second, fear of moralising was related to moral sensibilities about race. Policymakers and educators stressed the importance of what they called “considering the diversity of group identities.” In recent decades, organisations and policymakers working on sexual violence increasingly focused on “diversity” (Tjen-A-Tak & Van den Broek, 2014, p. 36; Wekker, 2017, p. 87). In a multicultural society like the Netherlands, trainers suggested, there are many different ideas as to what constitutes inappropriate harassment and what constitutes flirting, and it would be misplaced and ineffective to try to impose one such norm. Officials rarely spoke of opposing themselves to those in power (men), instead expressing worries about being perceived as attacking or moralising towards those in more marginal social positions than they are: young men of colour. Dutch policymakers’ and educators’ apprehension about stigmatising led them to try to avoid paternalistically imposing the norms of one group upon another, which would be problematic in a multicultural society with diverse ideas about what is acceptable behaviour in public space. Instead, they tried to encourage discussion about personal boundaries, hoping this would lead to the construction of collective norms without having to “impose” them.

This case shows that while the informalisation process led to the diffusion of reflexivity about individuality and diversity, this attentiveness creates new tensions for actors engaging in civilising campaigns. In trying to avoid imposing their own norms, Dutch policymakers risked being accused of failing to confront potential harassers with the problematic nature of their behaviour, thus treating the problem as simply a question of personal opinion and parroting the target group’s sexist views and vocabulary. The tendency to focus on individual feelings may create a blind spot for structural gender inequalities. Moreover, while Dutch policymakers and educators limited themselves to individual feelings when it comes to gender, they did refer to “cultural” groups and identities as a potentially useful category. Their desire to deconstruct oppositions between male and female, aggressor and victim, and start out from individual feelings to improve people’s interaction skills, led organisations to individualise the problem of street harassment. The fear of moralising, which is at the heart of the informalisation process in the Netherlands, stemmed from the desire to safeguard individual autonomy of oppressed groups such as racialised people, women, and LGBTQI+ people. However, when this fear leads to a failure to recognise how individual feelings are shaped by social relationships, it is likely that such an approach will in turn be accused of being an obstacle to the emancipation of exactly these groups.

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The Dutch *Burgerlijk* and the Emergence of Plural Masculine Habitus

Miklós Hadas

1 INTRODUCTION

While seemingly about men, traditional scholarship's treatment of generic men as the human norm in fact systematically excludes from consideration what is unique to men *qua* men. The overgeneralisation from male to generic human experience not only distorts our understanding of what, if anything, is truly generic to humanity but also precludes the study of masculinity as a *specific male* experience rather than a universal paradigm for *human* experience.

—(Brod, 1987, p. 2)

Paradoxically, as it is illustrated by the above quotation, the topic of masculinity usually remains hidden within social scientific analysis. This chapter, representing the Historical Studies on Men and Masculinities, does not want to exclude from consideration what is unique to men *qua* men. Following Pierre Bourdieu, I conceive of masculinities as habitus, that is, the incorporation of durable, non-reflected behavioural patterns that

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govern human praxis at the non-conscious level. By being perceptible, these “structured, structural structures” are liable to social classification and differentiation (Bourdieu, 1984). However, in contrast to Bourdieu, I intend to emphasise the historically conditioned variability and the plurality of masculine dispositions. By relying on Norbert Elias’ process sociology, my approach concentrates on the long-term changes of large figurations of key importance. Through historical examples, I intend to show that chains of interdependencies structure the most diverse areas of social existence. Religious life, urban development, science, warfare, colonisation, arts, gender relations, political life and so on are interconnected, and their constantly changing relations transform the dispositions.

The chapter is part of a larger work, a book provisionally entitled *Taming the Volcano*,¹ in which I intend to take a bird’s eye view of the thousand-year-long dispositional transformations of Western masculinities (Hadas, 2019). The aim of the book is not to conceive of this process in terms of a linear story, but rather as a process of transformation during which, from period to period, different hegemonic and counter-hegemonic masculine dispositions emerge.² Following Elias, who stresses that the European civilising process is reversible and there are many de-civilising counter-spurs within it (Elias, 1996; Mennell, 1990), I suggest that the masculine habitus is a civilised volcano which can erupt anytime if the conditions are given. Just think of Auschwitz, Gulag, Katyn, Srebrenica, Rwanda, or the Armenian genocide (De Swaan, 2015)! However, in the long run, as a result of changing structural constraints, violent hegemonic

¹ The volcano metaphor is used by Karl Loewenstein, a disciple of Max Weber, after his first encounter with the great German sociologist: “When I took my leave I was literally drunk. I was at a turning point in my life. From that moment on I had taken the oath of fealty to him; I had become his vassal... It is a manly face, something elemental, at times actually titanic, emanates from him... *His volcanic temperament erupts again and again.* Max Weber was a daemonic personality. Even in routine matters, there was something incalculable, explosive about him. *You never knew when the inner volcano would erupt*” (quoted by Bologh, 1990, p. 39, my italics).

² The most often used term within the Studies on Men and Masculinities is “hegemonic masculinity”, introduced by one of the founders of this sub-discipline, Raewyn Connell. It refers to “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (Connell, 1995, p. 77). The concept of hegemony, derived from Gramsci’s analysis of class relations, “is a historically mobile relation” and “likely to be established only if there are some correspondences between cultural ideal and institutional power, collective if not individual” (Connell, 1995, p. 77).

dispositions, conditioned by the knightly life, are gradually built upon pacified and civilised counter-hegemonic dispositions, rooted, originally, in the clerics' existence (Hadas, 2022).

This text concentrates on the “end of the story”, that is, on the crystallisation of the plural masculine habitus in the Dutch Golden Age. In the first part, I intend to sketch the emergence of different Western masculine dispositional patterns, pointing out that the practices of uncivilised libido dominandi are built upon newer and newer ideal typical dispositional configurations. In the second part, I sketch some of the historically structured internal and external factors that explain the rise of an exceptionally successful modern economy and bourgeois society in the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century. I discuss some of the social and geographical aspects, the role of the autonomous cities, the Reformed Church, the clergy, colonisation and certain components of private life. I also take a short look at one of the most famous occupational groups of the Republic, that of the painters, printers and engravers, who form the painters' guild. In other words, I intend to outline that, by structuring the most diverse areas of social existence, the chains of interdependencies contribute to the emergence of plural masculine dispositional patterns in the Dutch Golden Age.

2 OUTLINES OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF WESTERN MASCULINE DISPOSITIONS (ELEVENTH TO SIXTEENTH CENTURIES)

Feudalism, which crystallised across Europe in the Middle Ages, represented a social system in which groups of people gave up their autonomy, and, for security's sake, subjected themselves to the protection of other people. This brought about a feudal formation with the lord paramount at its peak (the king, after the emergence of feudal states). The cement that held these feudal relations together were the personal networks of interdependencies in which the obligations of loyalty to the superior were asserted. Military service was the duty of the *knights*, a particular subgroup of the nobility that embodied hegemonic masculine dispositions. According to Bourdieu, a man conditioned by the urges of the *libido dominandi* pursues activities throughout his life, “the extreme form of which is war” (Bourdieu, 2001). For mediaeval knights, Bourdieu's “extreme form” is the everyday reality of their existence that they take for granted.

The knights' main activities were nothing but warlike practices in their purest sense, denoting physical violence (Hadas, 2019).

Hence, it is appropriate to introduce the concept of *uncivilised libido dominandi* to designate a masculine habitus structured around the desire to fight, which manifests itself in real, often cruel murders. These drives constitute the core around which further layers of the habitus, like the scales of an onion, are built as a result of the long-term transformation of social interdependencies (Hadas, 2019). In an ideal-typical sense, the knight was a young professional warrior, a valiant and cruel champion who organised his life around fights and adventures. He spent little time at his home, whose primary function was to act as the point of departure for his conquests and plundering and to have a place to return to with his treasure. He acted on instinct, not restricting his uncivilised drives; he felt at home in transitional states and was accustomed to uncertainty: "Castle and manor, hill, stream, fields and villages, trees and woods still formed the background of their lives; they were taken for granted and regarded quite without sentimentality. Here they were at home, and here they were the masters. Their lives were characteristically divided between war, tournaments, hunts and love" (Elias, 2000, p. 181).

On the market for salvation goods, the *Roman Catholic Church* had exclusive monopolies: the duties and sanctions entailed by baptism determined both the believers' this-worldly and otherworldly existence. It proclaimed that human society was part of the God-created, eternal cosmic universe and that only the Church had the adequate knowledge by which the divine logic of the cosmic order could be comprehended, and the true path could be signposted. Entering this path held out the promise of eternal life and salvation—or else the miserable souls who succumbed to the lure of the devil were outlawed, excommunicated and cast into the depths of hell. It followed that emperors, kings, lords and other secular leaders had no other choice but to conduct their subjects towards the Christian path of life. No alternative could be conceived of or exercised during this age. The Church fought against sin, the devil and Satan and opined that it was the clerics who could do most to alleviate the wrath of God (Duby, 1981, 1983).

Monks incorporated the ideal-typical cleric: they were "*religious virtuosos*" (Weber, 1992), wishing to organise their life according to God. They lived in communities under the rules of religious orders (*religiosi*), which were permanent and irreversible for life and served as the centres of mediæval religiosity, severed from earthly existence. They were meant to assert

and embody values and a lifestyle following God as a perfect and impeccable example in the extreme. The elements of monastic life, the tenets elaborated in the rules and holy books, the commentaries to the sacred texts and the value system on which monastic life was based were a model not only for all other ecclesiastics but also for the laity. The monks lived by the Rule of St Benedict of Nursia (480–550), which, consisting of 73 chapters, regulated the daily life of the Benedictine Confederation, the earliest monastic community. The Rule called on monks to return to God, through the renunciation of their own will and by arming themselves “with the strong and noble weapons of obedience” under the banner of “the true king, Christ, the Lord”. Its motto was *pax, ora et labora* (peace, prayer and work). By the middle of the mediaeval period, the Rule had been instated in most European monasteries where it determined the patterns of daily religious practice.

In medieval Europe, the overwhelming majority of the population lived in small villages. At the same time, the number of towns and the proportion of town dwellers also kept increasing: in the Carolingian age, marshlands were drained, woodlands cleared and virgin soil tilled, resulting in a considerable increase in cultivated land (Elias called this process the “*internal expansion of society*”). During this process, *guilds*—that is, sworn communities of merchants and artisans—were created to satisfy customer needs and to represent the “common interests” of their members. The early guilds were still religious communities under some sacred patronage. They chose patron saints, and, if they could afford it, built a chapel for themselves, financed the members’ burials and supported the impoverished, orphaned and widowed. In other words, in the case of guild members, the rational teleology of the monk’s practice survived, but its otherworldly contents were replaced by this-worldly connotations. Structurally speaking, religious connotations to otherworldly stakes were enclosed in parentheses and replaced with this-worldly contents: the structural constraints of the urban existence conditioned a *habitus transfer*.

The parallels between guilds and monasteries are obvious. In both institutions, life was based on discipline, obedience, violence control and teleological rationality. Both monks and guild members were socialised to perform rational and well-structured work processes, acquired professional skills for life and were irreversibly integrated into a system of labour division. Monasteries and guilds displayed equally strict hierarchies of power: the members owed maximum obedience to the abbot or the master and were expected to respect their peers; and whoever violated the

rules that covered even the smallest details of life could face severe sanctions. Both monks and guild members were aware that their embeddedness in these communal structures was a guarantee of safety. Nevertheless, the vibrant urban milieu differed from the quiet, contemplative realm of the cloisters: while monks usually lived among men of their cast and were not expected to adjust to strangers,³ the proximity of neighbours and the presence of diverse social strata left urban dwellers no alternative but to accommodate themselves to the circumstances. Guild members indulged in pleasures, too, ranging from collective games through marriage to visiting prostitutes that clerics, given their vow of chastity and unconditional obedience, could not even dream of. In other words, similarly to the knight and unlike the monk, the urban citizen had the chance to engage in *dispositional relaxation*.

From the late Middle Ages onwards, power elites were concentrated in royal, episcopal and princely courts. In connection with the emergence of the state-level violence monopoly, the norms of knighthood, based on the economy of honour and masculine virtue, gradually lost their functions. The knight became *courtier*, so to speak: sometime after Francis I, the knight-king, came Henry IV, the latter-day knight king, who was followed by Louis XIV, the courtier king par excellence. These centres of power had a double function: partly to administer the state, the diocese or the estate, and partly to run the household of the ruler-prince or director-patrician. The courtier sought to accurately calculate the appropriate nuances of the behaviour to be followed. As part of this process, “in the course of the sixteenth century the use of the concept of *courtoisie* slowly receded in the upper class, while *civilité* grew more common and finally gained the upper hand, at least in France, in the seventeenth century. This is a sign of a behavioural change of considerable proportions” (Elias, 2000, p. 61). The core difference between *courtoisie* and *civilité* (courtesy and civility) was that, unlike the courteous knight, the civilised courtier had internalised empathy and was able to think in psychological terms (Elias, 2000, p. 67).

As is pointed out by Elias, the organisational machinery of the court society resembled the stock exchange: courtly rationality, that is, the competition for status and prestige, explained the calculated gestures and the carefully nuanced speech, which became “second nature” to the members

³ Some aspects of the life of a member of the mendicant orders drew him closer to the world of city dwellers, yet adherence to his order’s rule also ushered him towards the pole of religious virtuosity.

of this universe (Elias, 1983). Court societies became the main patrons of art and science: hegemonic dispositional patterns reached broader social strata via the good offices of the *humanist intellectuals*. This new stratum of writers, artists, scholars, lawyers and other professionals was in the service of secular (and sometimes ecclesiastical) dignitaries, from whom they received salaries and commissions. The appearance of this stratum is a good indicator of the process of differentiation that has led to the emergence of a diversified social structure, replacing the three orders (clergy, nobility, peasants) of the previous periods (Duby, 1981, 1983). In this structure, both vertical and horizontal mobility became easier for members of lower social groups. Their interests focused on the law and the humanities; they studied classical writers, legal sources, and ancient texts. They created the hermeneutic approach, that is, they extended the interpretation of old texts to the study of the circumstances in which they were produced.

Humanist intellectuals existed as a kind of cosmopolitan social body: they moved from university to university, from city to city, from one princely court to another. A Northern European painter would feel it his duty to visit Italy, as did the students who flocked to the universities of Padua and Bologna first among them (Burke, 2013). As they were articulating the expected behavioural standards in a civilised social environment, they also wrote several etiquette books:

All problems concerned with behaviour took on new importance. The fact that Erasmus brought together in a prose work rules of conduct that had previously been uttered chiefly in mnemonic verses or scattered in treatises on other subjects, and for the first time devoted a separate book to the whole question of behaviour in society, not only at table, is a clear sign of the growing importance of the question, as is the book's success. (Elias, 2000, p. 68)

From the fifteenth century onwards, as part of these processes, the world expanded, and became larger and more complex. Not only in terms of the structure of buildings and cities but also in terms of the universe as a whole, as illustrated by the development of astronomy and the transition from a geocentric worldview to a heliocentric one. Thanks to the great discoveries and the spread of colonisation on a global level, journeys were becoming more frequent and longer and the units of measurement more detailed (from musical notations to the calculation of the stars' motion). *Military revolutions* are indicators par excellence of this process. In early modern wars, there was no chance for an officer or a soldier to improvise

and thereby risk his life and the effectiveness of his unit. In early modern Europe, the requirements of a new kind of bravery crystallised, in which alignment, obedience and precision were of decisive significance: officers were forced to behave with far greater reserve and passivity than their mediaeval predecessors. Physical strength, bravery and risk-taking behaviour were replaced by rational self-control, cold-bloodedness and perseverance (Rogers, 1995). Actions that in the case of the mediaeval knight were seen as masculine feats of daring were now qualified as hectoring, that is, a lack of military discipline. In other words, the nobility turned into army officers and chivalry into cavalry.

Accordingly, as a result of the *infantry revolution*, which was part of the military revolution, wars became more frequent and bloodier—partly due to the social composition of armies. The remuneration and maintenance of an infantryman were much cheaper than the equipment of a knight, and his training took far less time. The infantry revolution went hand in hand with the *artillery revolution*, which started with the perfecting of guns and gunpowder. The growing length, strength and range of bows had serious strategic implications: As a result, wars based on defensive tactics were transformed into warfare based on offensive, expansive strategies. Spears and lances gradually gave way to artillery weapons (in many cases, artillerymen did not even know if the shells they launched hit their target or not), increasing the chance that the enemies could hit each other from a greater distance. (Rogers, 1995; Arnold, 2001). In other words, the target of violence was removed ever further. Consequently, the emergence of a web of interdependencies encompassing large geographic and social units entailed, paradoxically, an expansion of violence. In other words, *the price of violence control was that the libido dominandi tended to assert itself over an ever longer range, bringing its influence to bear in expanding circles.*

3 THE PLURALITY OF MASCULINE DISPOSITIONS IN THE DUTCH GOLDEN AGE

The so-called *Golden Age* witnessed the emergence of the Dutch Republic as the first and peerlessly successful state of Western capitalism. The Dutch not only dominated European and international trade but were also the most advanced and richest European nation, endowed with refined cultural institutions. A member of the Republic was a citizen with a national identity; half of the population were town dwellers, with free movement rights. This was a social space of mushrooming cities inhabited by

hundreds of thousands of people, and a total population of some two million. Compared to the rest of Europe, law and order were more sophisticated, public safety and welfare greater, health indicators better, fire prevention instructions more accurate, and the crime rate considerably lower—and the list goes on. The independent Dutch state evolved in the course of wars of varying duration. The Eighty Years' War—the revolt of the Protestant Dutch provinces against Catholic Spanish rule—began in 1568. In 1579, seven northern provinces proclaimed the Union of Utrecht, before announcing the dethronement of Philip II, King of Spain, and declaring the Dutch Republic in 1581.

The Anglo-Spanish war lasted from 1585 to 1604, as a result of which the Spanish crown lost control of the northern Dutch towns and ports but could keep Antwerp, Europe's most important port at that time. In 1585, the provinces of the Low Countries split into the mostly Protestant Dutch Republic in the north, and the mainly Catholic Spanish Netherlands in the south. The Spanish gave the Protestant population of Antwerp and other settlements under Habsburg rule four years to pack up and leave if they refused to reconvert to Catholicism. This triggered a wave of migration that lasted for about five decades: tens of thousands of rich and educated Protestant merchants, businessmen and craftsmen flooded into the northern towns. In addition to Protestants, other groups persecuted for their religion also headed north; first of all, Sephardi Jews were banished from Portugal and Spain, and later Huguenots fled France. One of the most significant social consequences of this migration was that by the 1630s, Amsterdam had replaced Antwerp as the region's main port and the centre of the global economy. Of course, a counter-migration also set in, as many (but by far not all) northern Catholics moved to the southern provinces.

Searching for the causes of the emergence of the Golden Age, specialists emphasise the country's geopolitical location, namely that the Netherlands were halfway between the Bay of Biscay and the Baltic Sea (Huizinga, 1968; Schama, 1997; Prak, 2005). The struggle against the sea served as an integratory force of crucial importance for the Dutch.⁴ According to Huizinga (1968), inland waters were even more significant

⁴ "Where boats and barges replaced horses and carts, the feudal system was poorly placed to supply the protection or indeed the extortion that underwrote its commands. So that the hardening of feudal hierarchies that took place elsewhere in Europe towards the end of the Middle Ages went by default in the Netherlands. And once labor-extensive stock raising was combined with fishing, market gardening, grain importing and inter-regional river traffic, the domination of the countryside by free farmers and urban mercantile capital became irreversible" (Schama, 1997, p. 40).

than the sea because the emerging canal infrastructure was decisive for domestic waterborne trade. This was supported by the availability of peat and—through the famous windmills—wind energy, not to mention such well-known features as the polders, the tulip fields or the dairy farms. Thanks to the country's favourable geopolitical location, it was ideally placed to benefit from the maritime trade between the Mediterranean and the northern European cities. The Dutch took advantage of this position in an exemplary manner: by shipping salt, wine, clothes, spices, silver and other colonial goods to the northern Hanseatic cities, and grain, fish, food and raw materials to the southern countries. In this way, they dominated over 50% of Europe's seaborne trade: towards the end of the seventeenth century, about a thousand Dutch ships sailed the Baltic Sea each year. It worked in their particular favour that neither the Poles nor the Swedes and Danes were in a position to defend the sea routes. The Dutch successes were also bolstered by a lack of rivals, for the rest of the great naval powers—first of all, the French, the English and the Spanish—were frequently engaged in fighting each other. What is more, the Rhine also offered the possibility to trade with inland areas (Schama, 1997).

But the Republic did not content itself with intra-European business alone. In 1602, the first world's earliest multinational firm, the Dutch East India Company, was founded. It acted not only as a state within a state (with its government, army, fleet and foreign policy) but, by establishing the first modern stock exchange, pioneered the issuance of shares to finance its investments. Through the Company, the Dutch founded Batavia (Jakarta) and occupied Java, Sumatra, Celebes, Western Borneo, Ceylon and Malaysia, thereby monopolising the Eastern spice trade and generating enormous profits. In addition, alone among European maritime powers, they earned exclusive rights to trade with Japan. As a result, the products of the European scientific and technological revolutions reached Japan via Dutch mediation until the mid-nineteenth century. It should also be emphasised that these achievements took place practically without any state intervention.

After the foundation of the Republic, a league of autonomous cities and provinces emerged wherein each constituent entity was endowed with political independence and well-functioning local self-government. The division of powers was based on federalism—in an age when the absolutist monarchy was the representative model in all of Europe. At the centre of the Dutch world were the city and its burghers, the *burgerlijk*. The social

structure was egg-shaped: the bulging urban middle class (*brede middenstand*) was surrounded above and below by relatively smaller lower and upper classes (Schama, 1997). Needless to say, maintaining the equilibrium of power was always a delicate matter, but in emergencies, common sense prompted politicians to cooperate in response to military threats. Symptomatically, during the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), the Dutch Republic alone was able to finance an army by itself, thanks to the fact that the Amsterdam banks provided half of Europe with cheap loans, the interest on which covered the country's military expenses.

Compared to other European countries, the local aristocracy had less social weight, drew on a relatively modest income and led a relatively simple life. Like many German noblemen, they bore no titles except perhaps that of "*heer van*" ("lord of"), and—unlike the English—they were largely devoid of courtly and military manners (Huizinga, 1968). It is worth noting that the Habsburg emperor in Vienna only began granting titles such as count to Dutch noblemen from the eighteenth century onwards. Nevertheless, the *burgerlijk*—ridiculing aristocratic manners—despised and mocked the lazy and pointless members of court society. Uniquely in Europe, "duelling was anathema in the Fatherland; common riot constrained to a minimum and civil commotion rare, thanks to the blessings of 'good governance' (*goede bestier*)" (Schama, 1997, p. 53). And the persecution of witches also ended a hundred years earlier than in the surrounding countries (Huizinga, 1968).

In addition to entrepreneurs, merchants and the wealthy citizens in charge of local government, Calvinist pastors also had a significant influence. The Calvinist Church—practically functioning as the state religion—was able to bridge the distance between patricians and common people, since clergymen were present both in the manor and the (work)shop. Church and secular institutions learnt to co-operate and co-exist: ministers were paid from the municipal coffers (Prak, 2005, p. 208), and the church budget was approved by the city government. It was to the credit of the pastors, most of whom came from the lower or lower-middle strata and thus advocated democratic ideas, that the Church developed an expressly anti-aristocratic ethos. Since the *burgerlijk* internalised cultural values and morally desirable dispositions mainly via religious institutions, even the most prominent patricians accepted, respected and adopted the values advocated by the ministers. These ministers—who were preachers rather than pastors—spread the word of God in the vernacular, ascribing

great importance to moralising and to passing judgement on any topic, from politics through art and dietary customs to marital duties and sexuality.

Recurring elements of Dutch national identity and self-image included the classical humanist virtues of the “golden mean” of Erasmus (Huizinga, 1984). The values proclaimed by the Calvinist Church were built on the virtues of patience, perseverance, ingenuity, invention, modesty, moderation, diligence, discipline, honesty, honour, courage, vigilance, purity, docility, piety, zeal, sobriety and outspokenness. The Dutch were firm in their belief—which later made its way to the New World, where it became known as the American Dream—that courage, hard work, fearlessness and determination would allow anyone to rise on the social ladder and join the rich and famous. A good Dutchman did not accumulate debt, honestly observed his contractual duties and held merchants in higher esteem than noblemen. His spouse was diligent, virtuous, domesticated and chaste (Schama, 1997, pp. 54, 230, 249). In this society, the followers of other religions were not persecuted. The constitution of the Union of Utrecht declared that “each person shall remain free in his religion and that no one shall be investigated or persecuted because of his religion” (Prak, 2005, p. 208). This tolerance resulted in religious diversity: even the Jews, most of them arriving from Portugal, Spain, Turkey and Italy, were more or less integrated. Although they were banned from the guilds and could only engage in wholesale trade, several towns granted them the right of residence (Prak, 2005, p. 217). The cities opened their gates to refugees, and the rivalry among them—at times even competition over the admission of migrants—turned the country into a cultural melting pot.

The vibrant intellectual climate was, of course, closely related to the invention of printing. While in 1600, there were 68 printing houses in the Netherlands, by 1650, 34 cities had at least one printer and publisher, for a total of 247 in the whole country. In this context, the founding of the University of Leiden in 1575, a secular institution no longer burdened by the weight of the mediaeval ecclesiastical past, should also be mentioned (Prak, 2005, pp. 226–27). Not accidentally, the Republic was also home to many first-class thinkers, including René Descartes, Christiaan Huygens, Hugo Grotius, Baruch Spinoza, Pierre Bayle and John Locke. Furthermore, as historical criminologists argue, sermons and legal restrictions turned the

more affluent citizens increasingly away from violence.⁵ Between 1550 and 1650—at a time when owing to plague, wars and civil strife, the population stagnated or declined in the rest of Europe—the Dutch population tripled.

Soldiers, much like noblemen, were generally not held in high esteem and were often the target of ridicule: in works of art, intimacy, familiarity and the positive features of the private sphere were emphasised over aspects such as public life, heroism or patriotism. Huizinga goes so far as to claim that the Dutch “lack a military character”. Though the navy was a more or less approved national institution, the land army could never rid itself of the shame and stigma of atrocities committed against civilians. Characteristically, when the urban civic guards—the *schutterstukken*—were depicted, it was not their military rank that was emphasised but their place within the patrician hierarchy.⁶ It was a commonly held belief that colonisers were a scrap of society, and that the cruelties in the Dutch colonies were perpetrated mainly by people from the lower classes. Undoubtedly, the Dutch imperialist efforts were strongly delimited by an aversion to resettle: only the worst-off groups of society showed any willingness to relocate to the colonies (Huizinga, 1968).

The Calvinist social teachings, rooted in humanism, promoted self-moderation and pious sobriety while condemning profit as the devil’s temptation. Calvinism and humanism both held that profit was immoral

⁵ Research has confirmed that from 1200 to 2000, the rate of homicide decreased in Europe on the whole. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, more than a quarter of noble males died violent deaths—either in duels with a peer or in wars (Pinker, 2011, pp. 81–83; Eisner, 2003, pp. 115, 127). Non-violent behaviour became tied to class only from the late sixteenth century onwards: in early seventeenth century Amsterdam, for example, the decline was linked primarily to the fact that the wealthy, churchgoing citizens renounced violence, while the men of the lower classes were still participating in knife fights (Spierenburg, 1998). As Eisner writes: “Mortal aggression became the object of a campaign of ‘moralization’ and ‘civilization’ around the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, between the religious wars and the Thirty Years War. This undertaking was visible mainly in the development of criminal law and in the growing sophistication of legal definitions as well as in the emergence of homicide as a matter for the gallows. This undertaking was relatively successful if we take into account the drop in the number of homicides and the virtual disappearance of private dispute settlements” (Eisner, 2003, pp. 126–127).

⁶ “Graphic artists like Goltzius and Jacques de Gheyn in the early years of the war had provided something close to a heroic, or at least a flamboyant, view of the man in arms. But that image had largely disappeared by mid-century, to be replaced by something closer to lowlife burlesque. For they feature prominently as the clientele of brothels in the work of Hendrick Pot” (Schama, 1997, p. 243).

and that those who devoted themselves to the cult of money would fall prey to the dire sin of idolatry. Yet there was a solution: spending money lessened the sin of capital accumulation and profit worship, because, in this way, the suspicion of avarice could be evaded (Schama, 1997, p. 334). However, this was not enough: both humanists and Calvinists accepted that wealth was not shameful as long as it was legitimated by donations. In other words, spending had to go hand in hand with charity. This was a morally defensible, optimal compromise that did not involve the condemnation of wealth (Schama, 1997, pp. 576–577). The Calvinist idiom, filled with humanist contributions, interpreted the world in terms of moral concepts—be it about acceptable business behaviour, the fate of the state, meals, good manners, family relations, aesthetic preferences or even washing rituals.

The laws that commanded the Dutch to the conspicuous observation of their washing rituals were moral rather than material. And they were deeply associated in the social habitus with the polarities of pride and shame, solidarity and alienness. The threshold of shame about tainting the neighbourhood was very low. In some towns, it was the neighbourhood authority, the *buurt*, that was formally responsible for keeping streets, and sometimes canals, clean. Because their jurisdiction was so small and their watch so omniscient, it was relatively easy to identify offenders against the communal canon. And there were legal sanctions to back up neighbourhood odium. Any person injured or soiled by refuse and filth were thrown from a window to the common street might claim double reparations before the magistrate (Schama, 1997, p. 378).

The source of power was the family hearth—both in a moral and in a social sense, as the edifice of society rested on this smallest pillar. Permanent residence ensured citizenship status and sorted people into religious communities, guilds, civic guards or charity organisations. The household acted as a sort of social community (*gemeenschap*) with a collective personality of its own. It was also the source of health that enabled the domestic virtues—sobriety, temperance, docility, kindness and fidelity—to overcome gluttony, lasciviousness, sloth and vain luxury.⁷ In middle-class families, women had considerable rights, too: though excluded from politics,

⁷ “The well-kept home was the place where the soiling world subjected to tireless exercises in moral as well as physical ablution. Once across its threshold the most hard-boiled, street-wise trader could expect to discover the moral equivalent of slippers: the comfort of untainted virtue” (Schama, 1997, p. 391).

they managed to secure certain individual and collective rights. They played leading roles in charitable institutions (orphanages, hospitals, old people's homes, etc.). The law ensured that after a husband's death, a widow got back her dowry; if a marriage had produced no children, half of the joint wealth was also her due. If a woman suffered violence, she could sue the perpetrator, an unmarried mother could file for affiliation and a wife subjected to marital infidelity could demand the invalidation of the marriage. Women could also conclude trade contracts and certify documents—that is, they enjoyed all the necessary formal rights to pursue commercial activity (Schama, 1997, pp. 400–407).

Calvinist preachers did not subordinate love to obedience but elevated it, as it were, to an indispensable precondition for a godly union. For spouses, it was a marital duty “to be tied to one another through a very dear and affectionate marriage-love. Through the kindling of love in all friendship and dearness, they should warm each other's hearts with conjugal feeling and love” (Schama, 1997, p. 421). In this emotionally stimulating family atmosphere, the roles of the child and the father also changed—a good indicator of which is the appearance of children's games in paintings, prints and even wall tiles. The seventeenth-century Dutchman had an amiable attitude towards his child, and not only the mother but also the father took delight in their offspring. Fathers were not ashamed of their feelings and might occasionally also give vent, publicly, to their pain over the loss of a child.⁸

To get a subtler picture of this world, let us take shortly a look at one of the most famous occupational groups of the Dutch Golden Age, that of the painters, printers and engravers. Much like in previous centuries, they were regarded as craftsmen: they rallied together in urban guilds set up at a regional level; dealers, art collectors and sometimes even art lovers would

⁸ “In 1632 and 1633, the great Dutch poet Vondel lost first a one-year-old son and then an eight-year old daughter. On both occasions he wrote poems, as much therapy for himself and his wife as memorial pieces. Both are remarkable for their direct emotional poignancy and distress. (...) To be sure, Vondel was no Calvinist, and would become a Catholic, but his moral and emotional qualities were wholly representative of the Dutch *burgerij* who commissioned paintings featuring their dead babies as cherubim in the sky. The second Vondel poem, *Uitvaart van mijn dochterken* [The Funeral of My Little Daughter], is even more distressing. (...) The poem is, in large part, a faithful and realistic reminiscence of the child laughing, skipping and playing in the streets or playing with her dollies. Sentimentality aside, it is almost unbearably poignant to read, climaxing as it does with the vivid image of the wreath of green and gold leaves set on her dead brow. Whatever else, this was not a sensibility coping with death through sublimation” (Schama, 1997, pp. 518–521).

also join them. Guild membership made it possible for them to have apprentices (for three to five years in general), to run workshops and exhibit their works on the guild's premises. Without guild membership, they could not practise their profession (women and Jews were generally not admitted into guilds; there were also serious conflicts between artists belonging to guilds and artists employed by rulers⁹). Later, as the guilds gradually became outdated, art academies appeared (sometimes guilds were transformed into art academies or so-called chambers of rhetoric), where the history and theory of art, literature, drama, philosophy, aesthetics, and so on were also taught.

In 1650, 600 painters and engravers were working in the Republic, or almost 2 artists per 1000 inhabitants (Prak, 2005, p. 241).¹⁰ The buyers were not princes, bishops or noblemen as in the mediaeval Italian cities, but cobblers and dike-reeves, doctors and peasants—and sometimes town leaders, too. Ordinary citizens not only prized painting but also print-making, for prints represented the world in an easily comprehensible manner. Engravings of castles, buildings and folk customs were turned out in enormous numbers, not to speak of calendars, portraits, emblems, vignettes and book illustrations. The Dutch consumer sought to embellish his home and environment. There was no demand for life-sized saints, scenes from Antiquity, majestic and monumental baroque solemnity or ostentatious elegance, nor for the passionate expression of lived-through mystery. The Dutch people did not need allegories; at most, a town hall might commission such rarefied works (Huizinga, 1968). People needed cheap and small works that portrayed easily identified, everyday genre scenes. The required style was realism: the painting had to resemble the patrons' actual reality and lived experience as closely as possible.

Clients appreciated mastery of the craft but usually, they did not choose individual artists but topics or genres for a specific place or occasion. They did not want a Vermeer or Frans Hals, but a lifelike portrait of their parents, or a still-life with tulips radiant with yellows and reds for the parlour, or a winter landscape with ships and windmills (Prak, 2005,

⁹Rubens is an exception to the rule, as he was a member of the Guild of St Luke in Antwerp, while also serving as court painter to Archduke Albert and Archduchess Isabella, the Spanish governors in Brussels.

¹⁰Among Delft's twenty-four thousand inhabitants, for example, there were 30 painters; a total of about eight million paintings (!) were created in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century (Prak, 2005, p. 241).

pp. 243–44).¹¹ These requirements were duly satisfied since there were paintings everywhere: in the rooms of town halls, rifle associations, offices, schools, chambers of rhetoric, orphanages, old people's homes, patricians' salons, common people's living quarters and so on. What is more, excellent paintings could be found even in the booths of Rotterdam fairs and in peasant cottages (Huizinga, 1968). The only place without such images were the churches, because, in this puritan Calvinist universe, paintings were banned from their walls. Nor could one find sculptures, as there was no demand for them (Huizinga, 1968).

The great majority of painters came from petty bourgeois families; they were relatively uncultured and uneducated, showing little interest in theoretical and stylistic questions about the arts. They usually never visited Italy (Rembrandt included), but—given their particularly dextrous hands—they had a perfect command of their craft (Huizinga, 1968). Jan van Eyck's motto, *als ic can* (as I can), sums up this disposition very well. It was commonly held that Vermeer was a “true Dutchman” because he didn't know theories, ideas or styles in a strictly defined sense (Huizinga, 1968). Moreover, in line with their focus on serial production, artists' workshops copied without any scruples. One specialised in flowers, the next in animals, a third in ships and others in sea battles, winter landscapes, clothes and fabrics, and so on at a high level. In a workshop, where paintings were prepared in co-operation between several specialists, any commission could thus be satisfied quickly and effectively. As prices correlated with working time, studios vied with each other to fulfil consumer desires faster and more perfectly (Prak, 2005, pp. 236–40). However, from the sixteenth century onwards, there were some affluent clients who did not content themselves with having high-quality paintings of diverse themes and genres but made efforts to create a “cabinet”, that is, a collection of art. In a first-ranking cabinet, it was appropriate to have a Dürer or a Holbein (Huizinga, 1968), and in the second half of the seventeenth century, a Rembrandt, too. In other words, the conditions had ripened for some painters to rise from craftsmen to artists.

Let us stop here for a moment. Although the present context does not lend itself to a detailed art historical analysis, certain statements can be

¹¹ Vermeer, for example, discovered and cherished by posterity, was little known in the seventeenth century Netherlands. Not only because the size of his oeuvre was relatively modest, consisting of only thirty works. First and foremost, he was not a painter, but an art dealer, a member of the St Luke's Guild in Delft, who sold the works in his own pub – as he was primarily an innkeeper (Prak, 2005, pp. 243–244).

formulated apropos Rembrandt. While he resembled his contemporaries in many regards—as a member of the St Luke’s guild, he not only painted but also engraved and collected works of art—he was the subject of special attention even in his own time. He lived by the market and depicted anyone on request, mainly in small-size pictures: mayors, noblemen, teachers, preachers, shipbuilders, Jewish doctors, engravers and goldsmiths, and so on. Extraordinarily prolific in a wide variety of genres, he was constantly renewing and experimenting. He was a Protestant, but he was also open to other religions.¹² Among the great painters, none produced as many self-portraits as he did. It is still an open question, one which continues to intrigue experts to this day, whether or not he was an individualistic, self-satisfied creator. According to Schama, Rembrandt was not at all an exhibitionist, because he dissolved himself in the represented figures—be they soldiers, civilians, beggars, princes or anybody else. Unlike Dürer, who wished to remain objective, or Rubens, who always depicted himself as a humanist patrician, Rembrandt got into the skin of his characters. He was a modern Proteus, an everyman, who put things in quotation marks: he played roles, immersed in buffoonery. In other words, as Schama argues, Rembrandt was a self-reflexive artist who experimented on himself, as these role-playing self-portraits served his professional-technical development.

Quoting Huygens, who writes about Rembrandt in his autobiography,¹³ Jan Białostocki, an eminent art historian, argues that seventeenth-century

¹² “The creators of what we think of as archetypal Dutch images on canvas often turn out to be equally heterodox in their confessional life. Vermeer’s exquisite parlors as well as Steen’s rowdy kitchens were both the work of Catholics. Rembrandt came from a family in which the father was a Calvinist and the mother a practicing Catholic. At different times he himself was attracted to Remonstrants, Mennonites, and to highly unorthodox sects like the Collegiants and the Waterlanders whose emphasis on extreme scriptural simplicity appealed to a Christian for whom the Bible was an anthology of human drama. And he was able to paint and etch rabbis, Predikants and Mennonite lay preachers with equal conviction and sympathy” (Schama, 1997, p. 122).

¹³ “I maintain that it did not occur to Protogenes, Apelles or Parrhasius, nor could it occur to them were they return to earth that (I am amazed simply to report this) a youth, a Dutchman, a beardless miller, could bring together so much in one human figure and express what is universal. All honor to thee, my Rembrandt!” (quoted by Rényi, n.d., my translation). Sir Constantijn Huygens (1596–1687), a courtier par excellence, was lord of Zuilichem, a poet, composer, diplomat and personal secretary of two Dutch princes. In addition to Latin and Greek, he also wrote poems in French, German, Italian and Spanish. He was knighted by both the French and English kings.

Dutch Protestantism created the right religious, cultural and psychological conditions for the development of compassion for the tragic experience of the depicted human being and “the individual comprehension of the moral realm”. Białostocki adds that “according to Huygens’s reflection, this ‘psychological’ interpretation is not some modern aesthetic fiction. This is not a picturesque turn towards modern intimacy, but the principle of the objective application of traditional rhetorical forms, namely that real human emotions can only be captured in the context of specific life situations and human relationships” (quoted by Rényi, without date, my translation).

4 CONCLUSION

One of the main objectives of this text was to try to apply Norbert Elias’ opus magnum (Elias, 2000) as *the* key reference in Historical Studies on Men and Masculinities. From a process sociological perspective, it becomes apparent that the chains of interdependencies (or figurations, in Elias’ terms) become longer during historical transformations:

With Western society as its focal point, a network of interdependence has developed which not only embraces more of the oceans than any other in the past, but extends to the furthest arable corners of vast inland regions. Corresponding to this is the *necessity for an attunement of human conduct over wider areas and foresight over longer chains of actions than ever before*. Corresponding to it, too, is the strength of self-control and the permanence of compulsion, affect-inhibition and drive-control, which life at the centres of this network imposes. (Elias, 2000, p. 379, emphasis added)

In the Dutch Golden Age, the *burgerlijks* overthrow the aristocracy and created a capitalist society for the first time in world history. Nevertheless, they made certain elements of the aristocrats’ dispositions—above all, their inclination to ostentatious consumption, the pursuit of pleasure and the taste for aesthetic distinctions—part of their everyday activities. The members of this stratum anticipated more links in the chain of interdependencies than any other social group ever before: from Gdansk to Batavia, from love poetry to mathematics, from business accounting to legally legitimate forms of cooperation. When buying shares in the East India Company, they made decisions based on rational calculation as economic actors; when supporting the poor by donations or cooperating with the followers of other religious communities, they acted as good Calvinists. When taking an active part in the life of both the town collectives (as night patrols)

and national-level politics (as deputies), they assumed the role of citizens respectful of the state and devoted to it. When buying paintings for their homes they acted as aesthetically conscious art consumers; when fulfilling their duties as fathers and husbands, they revealed themselves to be emotionally and psychologically sensitive householders. And when enjoying culinary delights and sexual pleasures, they behaved as happiness-seeking human beings. In sum, *the burgerlijk incorporated dispositional elements of earlier periods and—for the first time in Western history—contributed to the emergence of plural masculine dispositional patterns.*

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On the Concept of Hypermasculinity in the Study of Gender and Power in the United States: Towards a Figural Approach

Matt McIntosh, Jason Hughes, and Kabryn Hughes

1 PART I: TOWARDS A ‘FIGURATIONAL’ UNDERSTANDING OF HYPERMASCULINITY

1.1 The Origins of ‘Hypermasculinity’ as a Concept

The specific term ‘hypermasculine’ has its origins in the academic study of gender and masculinity (see e.g. Archer, 2010; Mosher & Sirkin, 1984; Peters et al., 2007), with the term gaining coinage over the past decade

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where it has been employed as a part-designation, part-explanation of attitudes and behaviours among male (and occasionally female) populations that are deemed so extreme, so absolutist, as to be ‘asocial’ (Archer, 2010; Caspi et al., 1987; Mosher & Anderson, 1986; Pleck et al., 1993; Russell, 1992; Zaitchik & Mosher, 1984). Crucially, that certain values, attitudes, and behaviours have come to be understood as *hypermasculine* suggests at once the emergence of behaviours that are *excessively* masculine, or beyond what might be deemed to constitute ‘normal’ masculinity (hypermasculine *attributes*), and, simultaneously, a set of social and epistemic conditions under which such behaviours and attitudes are identified and designated as such (hypermasculine *attributions*).

The term ‘hypermasculinity’ attests to extremely misogynistic and derogatory masculine attitudes and behaviours that have arguably gained (re)-ascendancy as part of populist political-cultural milieu, spearheaded by figures such as Donald Trump in the United States, in which they have found less inhibited forms of expression (Kray, 2022; Powell et al., 2018; Smith & Higgins, 2020). Simultaneously, such milieu also relate to conditions involving a growing awareness of, and opposition to, the corrosive social consequences (‘asociality’) of hypermasculine attitudes and behaviours, as exemplified by, for example, the recent #MeToo movement. In relation to the latter, the term hypermasculinity has developed a signal function of identifying behaviours (e.g. the routinised grooming, exploitation, violation, and assault of women, particularly by men in power) that were, by some, once considered ‘normal’ aspects of masculinity, and which were actually expressions of gender power disparity and often systemic violence (see e.g. Enloe, 2019).

Thus, hypermasculinity describes neither *simply* the ascendancy of hypermasculine behavioural attributes, nor *simply* the expansion of concerns or sensitivities about (what would otherwise be deemed ordinary) masculinity—hypermasculine attributions. Rather, the term properly denotes a set of processes in which emotional, symbolic, and behavioural ‘canons’ (more on this term shortly) relating to masculinity have come both to express and entail escalating levels of conflict and contestation, or better, shifting balances and asymmetries of power, between particular social groups.

1.2 *The Development of 'Hypermasculinity' as an Academic Concern*

The terminology of hypermasculinity has been centrally explored in a subset of scholarship over the past thirty years within the study of masculinities, criminal justice, and deviance identifying and delineating a range of 'hypermasculine' attitudes and behaviours. These include: a strong attachment to notionally 'traditional'/'authentic' conceptions of masculinity (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984) and an associated tendency towards aggressive behaviours (Kilmartin & Allison, 2013; Mosher & Sirkin, 1984; Pleck et al., 1993; Russell, 1992). Early studies proposed that hypermasculine behaviours and attitudes were concentrated among economically disadvantaged strata (Spencer et al., 2004), with particularly strong associations with lower education attainment (Czopp et al., 1998), and lower socio-economic status (Caspi et al., 1987).

Such associations have been carried forward in later scholarship, with hypermasculine attributes linked to economic deprivation and inequality, and seen as in themselves a source of social pathology/disadvantage. For example, John Archer, who has created a widely employed contemporary measure of hypermasculinity—the Hypermasculine Values Questionnaire (HVQ)—suggests that 'the possession of traditional masculine traits is detrimental to an individual's functioning in a modern industrial state' (Archer, 2010).

The designation that hypermasculine behaviours are 'asocial' variously relates to: firstly, how hypermasculine behaviours/attitudes/language violate pro-social/'progressive' behavioural standards; secondly, how hypermasculine behaviours/attitudes are in themselves understood to be corrosive to social relationships (in particular between different sexes); and thirdly to how hypermasculine behaviours/attitudes are both associated with social disadvantage and themselves constitute a source of disadvantage and economic marginalisation.

1.3 *The Process-Reducing Origins of Hypermasculinity as a Concept*

While the specific term 'hypermasculine' was first employed in relation to the development of a Hypermasculinity Index (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984), the concept articulates a longer ascendancy of scholarship that has sought to quantify masculinity or masculine characteristics, typically to elucidate the relationship between more absolutist masculine psychometric traits

and ‘asocial’ behaviours. Such measures/scales include the: Attitudes Towards Women Scale (Spence et al., 1973), the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (Bem, 1974, 1979), the Male Role Norm Scale (Thompson & Pleck, 1986), the Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Perry, 1992), the Hypergender Ideology Scale (Hamburger et al., 1996), the Revised Hypermasculine Index (Peters et al., 2007), and the most contemporary Hypermasculine Values Questionnaire (Archer, 2010).

These and other similar measures share a psychologistic tendency to treat hypermasculinity as a quasi-pathological individual ‘trait’ that can be ‘measured’ and treated as a ‘variable’ and correlated with other ‘variables’, notably ‘asocial’ attitudes and behaviours. This rendering of social and psychological processes involved in the development, expression, and suppression of hypermasculine ‘traits’ into measurable individual ‘states’ that can be correlated with various other ‘social pathologies’ (e.g. delinquency, disadvantage, sexual violence, and so forth) entails a problematic ‘process reduction’ (Elias, 1978b). Such psychologistic/psychometric approaches to hypermasculinity offer no means to understand *the social conditions under which such attitudes, attributes, and behaviours have emerged, how they have gained ascendancy over time, how they have historically expanded/contracted, and how in the future they might further develop or diminish in spread and significance.*

In more recent years, however, the study of hypermasculinity has involved more qualitative and sociologically oriented endeavour. Tea Torbenfeldt Bengtsson’s (2016) study of Danish institutions for young offenders, for example, explores how performances of gender and hypermasculinity are not only an ‘expression of the individual young person’s [individual/psychological] performances but rather [operate as a] dominating institutional frame guiding all gender performances’ (Bengtsson, 2016, p. 410). These ‘frames’ can be called upon dynamically within different environments to communicate to those around. Within such figurational nexuses—here, male-dominated young offender institutions—the characteristics associated with hypermasculinity operate in accordance with a social script of behavioural tropes that are culturally recognisable to others, and that have emerged under particular sets of social conditions over time.

1.3.1 *Connell and Developments in Studies of Masculinities and Hypermasculinity*

Bengtsson’s approach to hypermasculinity owes much to more general changes in gender and masculinity studies, particularly the influential

scholarship of key figures such as R.W. Connell, Michael Kimmel, and others whose work they have influenced.

Connell's work, in particular, is centrally concerned with 'how gender relations are organized as a *social* concern' (Connell, 1987). Through a painstaking study of the historic developments of gender through history, Connell helps to deconstruct 'femininity' and 'masculinity' as singular and monolithic 'ideals', 'traits', or variables, and instead explores the processes by which certain gendered behavioural/attitudinal models have achieved hegemony while others have been classified as less esteemed and/or socially deviant.

In *Gender and Power* (Connell, 1987) and the later work *Masculinities* (Connell, 2005), Connell developed a paradigm for the study of men that has become widely known as the 'hierarchy of masculinities paradigm'. Pre-figuring work relating to intersectionality (e.g. (Crenshaw, 1991), Connell developed a theoretical framework which sought to explore the connections between gender and an array of other sources of social differentiation and inequality, principally social class (Connell, 1987, 2005). Connell's 'hierarchy of masculinities paradigm' also supported interrogation of the interdependence of gendered attitudes and behaviours and those relating to ethnicity, sexuality, ableism, and so forth, particularly in relation to those constellations of masculinity that have emerged among certain social groups as signifiers of 'superiority'—whiteness, physical strength, suppression of emotion, and heterosexuality, etc.—according to a hierarchy which situates other variants of masculinity—in turn invoking other combinations of sexuality, ethnicity, physicality, etc.—that rank below these (Connell, 2018).

Connell's work crucially highlights how the ascendancy of the particular, absolutist forms of masculinity that are both inferred by the concept of hypermasculinity, and to which the concept of hypermasculinity responds, involves not simply a set of individual, pathological psychological traits/characteristics, but rather, *a complex social constellation of shifting power relations between the sexes, ethnic groups, and an array of other 'established-outsider' power figurations that has developed over time, and in tandem with a number of other broader social, geo-political, and cultural processes.*

1.4 Connell, Elias, and Approaching Hypermasculinity/ Hypermasculinisation as an Emergent Social 'Canon'

There are strong affinities between Connell's historical analysis of emergent hierarchies of masculinity and Elias's process sociology which is

centrally attuned to shifting hegemonic social ‘canons’ (Elias, 2022). These express behavioural and emotional standards, normative codes, and modes of identification, and their relationship between wider centripetal and centrifugal processes of social integration and disintegration—patterns Elias includes under the more general heading of ‘state formation’.

Elias’s work demonstrates how the watchwords of particular times/places/peoples express the self-consciousness of specific hegemonic groups and invariably invoke and entail shifting constellations of social power. Key examples include those Elias traced in his *On the Process of Civilisation* (Elias, 1982), including the historical shift from social canons that centred on notions of ‘courtesy’ (which expressed the consciousness, ideals, and standards of *courtly* aristocratic groups), ‘civility’ (which expressed the *civic* norms of the urban and urbane public sphere), and later towards ‘civilisation’ (the *colonial* norms of imperial geo-political nations, and in which were inscribed their sense of superiority in relation to their supposedly ‘uncivilised’ and ‘barbaric’ ‘inferiors’) (Elias, 1982).

Through these, Elias identifies a ‘drag effect’ from one prevailing ‘social canon’ to the next, whereby some aspects of a former social canon endure, albeit finding different modes of expression in subsequent social canons. Moreover, these social canons inevitably *relate to more than themselves*, comprising more than mere discursive and/or normative shifts. They at once entail, express, and invoke shifting social, cultural, economic, and political processes and formations. For instance, civilisation is a comparative term that emerges in relation to colonial expansion, imperial rule, and related hegemonic and genocidal conflicts. Such watchwords, then, simultaneously express and entail a complex blend of shifts and continuities in power figurations. Thus, while, for example, some colonial power relations in the form of direct imperial rule may come to an end, the social canons of colonial power may find enduring modes of expression in relation to culture, language, the arts and science: from mythological depictions of the orient, to the systematic epistemicide of indigenous forms of knowing, all undertaken in the name of ‘civilisation’ (De Sousa Santos, 2015; Elias, 1982; Said, 2019).

Significantly, a key component of the shifting social canons that Elias explored consistently relates specifically to gender power relations and their specific relation to the various ‘integration conflicts’ that arise in processes of state formation. For instance, in *The Court Society* (Elias, 1983) Elias traces how under successive courtly-aristocratic regimes in early-modern Europe a cadre of knights gradually came to be ‘courtised’:

whereby their behavioural codes and standards came to transform from those centring on warrior masculinity with its core emphasis upon *being able to handle the self* in relation to physical combat, and towards those of courtiers with a central emphasis upon *knowing how to handle the self* in polite society. Such shifting forms of ‘selfhood’ included the growing capacities to gain social advantage through outward displays of refinement, chivalry towards females of higher social rank, currying favour with members of the aristocratic elite, and in a myriad of other ways being able successfully to negotiate complex social power figurations entailing differentiated and nuanced displays and affectations of gender. These, argues Elias, in turn necessitated a tandem interpersonal and intrapersonal economy of affect that, under certain conditions, involved increasing demands to restrain spontaneous impulses, a growing balance towards the inhibition or sublimation of violence, sexual desires, and so forth.

Via these and more contemporary examples, Elias was centrally concerned with the dynamic interplay between social developments (‘sociogenesis’) and psychological development (or ‘psychogenesis’). Such analyses involve a consideration of the social conditions under which there develops an overall *social constraint towards more reflexive, differentiated, and stable self-restraint and self-expression*, and of how such behavioural and emotional standards come to spread between groups and across social strata. This includes an analysis of those social conditions that favoured greater control over the development, expression, and realisation of what we now label as ‘hypermasculine’ traits, particularly those of a violent character, as well as those in which such restraints are relaxed, change form, or altogether break down.

1.4.1 *Hypermasculine Emotional Spirals: Fears and Perceived Threats to ‘Authentic’ Identity*

As a particular case in point, Elias explores the central role of emotion in the interplay between sociogenesis and psychogenesis, particularly those social conditions that in themselves engender escalating levels of fear relating to perceived threats to collective sources of identity. Under such social conditions, Elias proposes, spans of mutual identification with other genders, other social and ethnic groups, can come to diminish. For instance, as Dunning and Hughes (Dunning & Hughes, 2020) explore, in Britain prior to the 2016 vote for Brexit, media-fuelled fears relating to immigration were actively harnessed and fostered by far-right groups. Dunning and Hughes propose that such fears were systematically orchestrated to

engender the popular sense that core anchors of British national identity (e.g. the National Health Service, traditional British values, bastions of British culture, etc.) were under attack by the influx of migrants from the European Union and, via the supposed constraints imposed by EU Laws, beyond the EU (in particular from middle eastern nations). Partly as a response to such fears and the broader emotional spirals that these engendered, some groups within British society came increasingly to reject and shun more cosmopolitan, multi-culturalist, and European sources of identity, and concomitantly came to embrace increasingly narrow ethno-nationalist and traditionalist conceptions—‘we-images’ and ‘they-images’ which played on mythologies of authentic Britishness and the notion of a supposed return to a golden, sovereign, and geo-politically powerful past (Dunning & Hughes, 2020).

In more recent scholarship on hypermasculinity, aspects of such processes, particularly the ascendancy of hypermasculinity in response to perceived threats and escalating fears, have become a major theme. The ‘Precarious Manhood Theory’ of Joseph A. Vandello and Jennifer K. Bosson is a particular case in point. Vandello and Bosson propose that men feel particularly threatened by perceived challenges to their masculinity, with such supposed challenges leading to increased male-type behaviour, such as increased aggression, risk-taking, and related consequences, including the deterioration of mental health and appropriate work-life balances (Vandello et al., 2008; Vandello & Bosson, 2013). Such ideas build out of a longer-standing theoretical notion that masculinity is fundamentally precarious and is a recurrent and consistent source of strain and anxiety (Kimmel, 1987, 2008; O’Neil, 2008; Pleck, 1976, 1981).

2 PART II: APPLYING A ‘FIGURATIONAL’ APPROACH TO ANALYSING HYPERMASCULINISATION PROCESSES

2.1 *Hypermasculinity and Power in the United States*

The analysis presented here builds out of a larger study of the United States (McIntosh forthcoming) which examines how hegemonic groups have over time come to perceive their individual and collective power potentials, and the threats thereto, and how such processes in turn have entailed changes in masculine behaviours and values and shifting sensitivities relating to these. Notwithstanding the limitations of scale and scope, we propose the historical delimited examples we provide here highlight

the significance of long-term processes in the development of ‘hypermasculinity’, and in the study of gender more generally. Accordingly, we offer some provisional, exploratory examples of shifting power balances between hegemonic and subordinate groups in the United States highlighting how changes, or challenges, to power balances connect to shifting expressions of specific masculine characteristics. Our aim, however, is to lay the foundations for further explorations of these concerns both within and beyond the specific case of the United States.

2.2 *The Sociogenesis of Hypermasculinisation Processes in the United States*

In considering the following historical cases, it is important to examine the array of challenges (perceived or otherwise) presented to hegemonic dominance by subordinate groups. Our focus is upon historically established hegemonic groups—and by this, we mean here the historically greater power chances of, in particular, white, male, Anglo-Saxon, protestant, cis, and heterosexual groups in the United States. We fully recognise, however, that this delineation of our focus is insufficient to encompass the complex nuances, and balances of power: the shifting relational power dynamics involved and the interplay between diverse groups that exist and have long existed in American history. Such issues are further compounded by the social complexity of the United States, with its extensive spatial and geopolitical heterogeneity, its multiple cultural/power centres, and its long and complex indigenous histories. Consequently, we have opted to focus primarily on major metropolitan hubs from different regions—Los Angeles for the West Coast, Chicago for Middle-America, New York for the East Coast, and several different sources to represent the South. This obviously under-represents rural and the growing suburban communities during the periods we have examined, which we have sought in part to balance through recourse to several secondary sources relating to such regions and populaces. Nonetheless, what we offer here are exemplars suggestive of more general patterns of change, which highlight the fundamental inter-relationships core to shifts in social canons of masculinity.

Several strategies were employed to identify the expectations of individuals, including a literary analysis of legislation, scientific findings, and biographical accounts of prominent individuals. Manners books as well as educational research pamphlets and treatises were also consulted and assessed to determine expectations of behaviours and how these may have changed historically.

Statistical data from different periods also provided important insights, particularly concerning levels of violence, specifically 1890–1933, and the inter-war period and after, namely, 1933–1945. These periods arguably capture important historical junctures marking key developments in shifting balances of power between men and women and, relatedly, social canons of masculinity. Key inter-related developments include the ascendancy of women's suffrage, the Great Depression and mass unemployment, shifts in patterns of migration, and two world wars that entailed important shifts engendering certain challenges (both perceived and actual) to traditional/hegemonic masculine social canons.

2.3 *Phase I: 1890–1933*

The period 1890–1933 saw several challenges, both perceived and actual, to hegemonic power balances in the United States. The opening of Ellis Island (1892) as the country's first immigration centre marked a dramatic shift in patterns of migration to the United States. While most immigrants to the country prior to the period were Anglophonic, more immigrants from different linguistic and ethnic groups began to immigrate. The internal migration of significant numbers of African Americans from the south was also characteristic of this period. Growing industrialism increasingly depended upon immigrants, with migrants comprising by 1920 more than half of the manufacturing workforce (Hirschman & Mogford, 2009, p. 1).

In discussing such developments, our aim here is expressly not to lend support to the notion that patterns of migration constituted a threat to particular (e.g. white, male) hegemonic groups, but rather to highlight how the *perception* of threat was sufficient to invoke just as much of hegemonic response as any actual challenge to their dominance. In this connection, Elias (Elias, 1978a) draws a useful distinction between escalating levels of *fear* and changing levels of actual *danger* whereby fears and dangers can be understood as related, but by no means synonymous. Indeed, Elias suggests, it is quite possible to have escalating levels of danger (e.g. such as those engendered by anthropogenic climate change) without fears among certain social groups; and conversely, to have escalating levels of fear without corresponding increases in danger, however conceived (see again the discussion of Brexit in the UK by Dunning & Hughes, 2020).

In addition to these population shifts, other significant developments included marked changes in the socio-political participation of women in society. These included the inter-related rise of women's emancipation/

suffrage movements, the pressures of industrialism, and the increasing employment of women—with the foundation of the National Women's Trade Union League in 1903—and, again interrelatedly, their direct involvement in the United States war effort in World War I, with women enlisted for the first time as serving members of the military (see e.g. Grayzel, 2023).

Such changes also coincided with the closure of the American frontier. This large expanse, or at least the perception of it, had, from the time of the first European settlers, played a significant role in cultural definitions of 'rugged masculinity'—with all the connotations related to such tropes: of self-determination, independence, untampered strength, tenacity, independence, and so forth. The image of the frontier expressed core facets of individualism that alloyed with distinctively American notions of 'authentic' and 'traditional' masculinity, and the closing of the frontier was seen to mark their demise and the passing of a 'golden age' for America (Dubbert, 1979).

The notion that traditional and authentic forms of 'rugged', individual masculinity were in demise, and/or were under threat found expression in concerns that American men, and boys in particular, were in danger of becoming 'feminised', perhaps emasculated; with the danger that adult males would soon no longer be able to meet their role demands, and that, accordingly, corrective steps had become necessary to remedy such developments (Filene, 1975; Pleck, 1980). These concerns were directly linked to the shifting power chances of women, such as in women's levels of economic participation and their changing role in the raising of children at home and in education (Sugg, 1978). In addition, processes of militarisation, in particular the campaign for promoting military 'preparedness' in the run up to World War I involving the advocacy of militarising public schools were also of significance. Key women suffragists of the time organised in direct opposition to it, forming the American School Peace League. Indeed, education and schooling came to be a key 'battleground' between advocates of peace and militarists, with the 'battle' playing out primarily and explicitly as a 'battle of the sexes' (Zeiger, 2003).

In this context, prominent early-twentieth century educational psychologists such as G. Stanley Hall and James McKeen Cattell professed that the increased influence of women in boys' lives was having a degenerative effect on their masculinity (Dubbert, 1974). Cattell, for instance, reasoned that a 'vast horde of female teachers in the United States [had come to] subvert both the school and the family... [as] attractive and

normal girls and the few able men, tend to drop out, leaving the school principal, narrow and arbitrary, and the spinster, devitalized and unsexed, as the dominant elements' (Cattell, 1909, pp. 92–93).

The implications of such statements are wide-ranging: they portray women's involvement in education as a subversion of a supposedly natural order that damages both women themselves and their charges, depriving each of sexual vitality and personal fulfilment. While it is difficult to gauge the specific and direct influence of such ideas on teachers and educational administrators, these kinds of views were at the very least consonant with a more general movement that supported a gender-based separation in schooling, and the differential education of boys and girls—ideas that were to become enshrined in educational policy in the so-called Progressive Era (1897–1920) and, to a degree, in the early decades that followed it (Seller, 1981, p. 371). Related developments of the period also included the emergence of the Boy Scouts and other fraternal organisations whose aim, at least in part, can arguably be understood as a response to growing anxieties relating to masculinity (see e.g. Rohrer, 2023).

As a counter to fears of the 'effeminisation' of young men, 'boyhood' was increasingly valorised in this period, and in part redefined in direct opposition to then dominant notions of femininity. Developmental psychologists and parenting books of the early twentieth century, for instance, came to reappraise fighting, rough-housing, risk-taking, and so forth through a newfound moral-cum-scientific prism, with boys actively encouraged to engage in such behaviours. As a case in point, in his (1912) *A Boy and His Gang*, J. Adams Puffer argued that fighting was of great 'pedagogical value' since 'there is nothing like a fight between individuals to teach physical and moral courage, self-reliance and self-control': ideals that, Puffer suggested, would equip a young male later in life to *fight the essential battles of adult life*. Fighting up to six times per week, Puffer proposed, should be permitted as the lack thereof may otherwise cause a boy to 'become a coward, and lose the road to independence and true manhood' (Puffer, 1912, p. 90).

Likewise, the educational psychologist G. Stanley Hall argued during this period that the posturing and fighting of youth were natural for 'utilitarian purposes' and were 'still necessary for perfecting the organism' (Hall, 1926, p. 79). In Hall's case, the problematisation of masculinity as 'under threat' and in need of correction intersected with his own Eugenicist ideas about racial supremacy entailing dehumanising attitudes towards those deemed to constitute social inferiors: both women and 'lower races'.

Eugenicist and Darwinist ideas thus provided a supposedly scientific justification for violence (both systemic and interpersonal), risk-taking, and a harsh attitude towards outsider groups as a natural part of what was seen to be the natural '*Sturm and Drang*' of (white male) adolescence (Hall, 1904).

During this period, a series of immigration reforms emerged in tandem the popularisation of racist theories that reinforced white, male superiority as well as traditional gender roles, and the expansion and legislative influence of ethnic hate groups (Lombardo et al., 2011; Okrent, 2019). Such ideas, which again masqueraded as 'scientific' (and were widely accepted as such at the time), began to play a larger role in providing justifications and motives for political and social action. Indeed, some saw it as both their patriotic and scientific mission to protect America's future from being overrun by 'feeble-minded degenerates' (Doll, 1923). This period saw the creation of several different organisations designed specifically for this end, including the Eugenics Section of the American Breeders Association (founded 1903), the Race Betterment Foundation (founded 1914), the Human Betterment Foundation (founded 1928), and the Eugenics Records Office (founded 1910) (Black, 2003; Kevles, 1995). The formation of these groups, each of which included the membership of prestigious and notable intellectual figures of the time, indicated an expanding acceptance of eugenicist ideas and other expressions of scientific racism, not only as sound scientific theories, but as a basis for the development of a future better, more perfect society through forced sterilisation and selective breeding to promote racial purity and human perfection (Schrag, 2010, p. 79).

Such sociogenetic changes codeveloped with psychogenetic changes in masculine behaviour as more aggressive and ultra-sexualised ideas of masculinity came into conflict with Victorian standards expressing civilised ideals of self-restraint (Bederman, 2008, p. 19). As a case in point, President Theodore Roosevelt cultivated a persona of impulsive, rugged, and unapologetic masculinity. Roosevelt wrote several autobiographical accounts, most of which regarded hunting, fighting, and adventuring as masculinity in action. In general, Roosevelt's exploits throughout his life demonstrate an unabashed quickness to violence and a near-obsession with nature, hunting, and thrill-seeking. Likewise, his own courtship holds some clues to his anxiety about women's increasing freedom and influence. For example, he procured duelling pistols to threaten anyone who came close to his fiancé (Boffey, 1957). Roosevelt was arguably

emblematic of a broader counter-tendency to a longer-term civilisational *social constraint towards self-restraint* (Elias, 1982) relating to the development of monopolies over violence and taxation in the formation of the United States (Mennell, 2007). Here the integration and equalisation conflicts between hegemonic established and outsider groups came to find expression in a shift towards ideals stressing masculine counter-pacification, arguably representative of a broader ‘de-civilising spurt’ during this period (see e.g. Dunning & Mennell, 1998).

We can observe this dynamic interplay of equalisation and integration conflicts between established and outsider groups, Darwinist and Eugenicist pseudo-scientific rationalisations, and specific fears that ‘traditional’ and ‘authentic’ canons of masculinity were becoming eroded through the cossetting of a pacified (and ‘feminised’) education, in relation to treatises on education reform during this period. Once again, the American psychologist and educator, G. Stanley Hall, serves as an exemplar. Hall felt he could use education to recognise, recover, and encourage the ‘savagery’ in boys for them to learn to withstand the ‘effeminizing’ (read here pacifying and restraining) effects of socialisation. The goal, according to Hall, was to transform young men’s sexual passions into a source of ‘nervous energy’ that could then be used to ‘reconstruct adolescent male sexuality in ways which did not stress self-restraint’ (Bederman, 2008).

As Woody Register argues, the acceptability of impulsive hypermasculine behaviours within adults is indicative of a diminishing psychological distance between boyhood and manhood—what could be called a diminished masculine psychogenesis—entailing an increasingly muddled, less clearly demarcated transition from boyhood to manhood, and at that one markedly less dependent on the development of stable self-control (Register, 1999). Register has assessed this phenomenon in depth in relation to key masculine figures in early twentieth-century America, exploring how the success of men during this period, such as Oscar Hammerstein I or Frank Lloyd Wright, had come increasingly to be ‘attributed not to their self-possession and discipline, but to the fact that they had never grown up’ (Register, 1999, p. 198). Accordingly, these analyses, the examples we provide, and other sources from the period suggest it may have entailed a net reduction in the social pressure for males to differentiate their behaviour in manhood from boyhood. Indeed, as the few historical examples we have discussed here also serve to illustrate, the period also involved a related celebration of male youth, unfettered masculinity, and

the associated impulsiveness and relative lack of restraints that are associated with such notions.

Summing up, we have argued that the examples we have analysed are suggestive that this period in American history entailed a series of developments which engendered escalating levels of fear among hegemonic 'established' groups (predominantly white cis male groups) based on the emergent understanding of themselves as in danger, under threat, principally via what was considered an erosion of 'natural' or 'traditional' expressions of white masculinity and the power chances understood to relate to these. Such purported dangers were explicitly linked by influential social commentators to the shifting power chances of established and outsider groups, processes of militarisation, changing levels of social integration, and equalisation conflicts, particularly those relating to the increasing economic participation of women (and their changing role in the raising of children at home and in education), and shifting levels of migration, both of Black Americans from the South and from outside of the United States.

Crucial, in this respect, is the possibility that shifting canons of masculinity—of which 'hypermasculinity' marks a particular expression—arise partly in response to the elevation of *fears*, not *dangers*, of a threat to the hegemony of established groups, and involve *multiple* axes of power relations (between the sexes, between different ethnic groups, between capital and labour, etc.) simultaneously.

2.4 *Phase II: Interwar Years and After (1933–1945)*

As the United States slowly transitioned out of the Great Depression, some of the actual and perceived challenges to hegemonic dominance began to decline. Throughout the 1920s, increases in productive efficiency meant that industrial growth could be achieved without a significant expansion to the workforce (Oshima, 1984). While a residual effect of the depression was the availability of a huge pool of cheap, unskilled labour, the United States' domestic industrial growth itself was becoming less dependent on such sources of labour, partly through a move towards a shifting skill demand equilibrium, and the increasing displacement of low-skilled production overseas in protected post-war markets (Margo, 1993).

Additionally, restrictive immigration reforms continued to expand throughout the 1920s with President Hoover instructing consular officers carefully to apply the criteria 'likely to become public charge' (i.e. likely to

become dependent on the state for subsistence) towards common labourers and artisans, causing the number of European visas to drop approximately 60 percent between 1930 and 1932 (Fox, 2012, p. 127). This, coupled with the economic disincentives of the crash, dramatically reduced immigration. Both the number of migrants and, more importantly, their proportion of the total United States population, demonstrate a steady decline from 1930 to 1970 (Migration Policy Institute, 2018). Crucially, as Carter et al. (1996) show, shifting migration policies in the United States from the 1920s onwards became increasingly attuned towards constructing migration in racialised terms: differentiating populations through nationality controls, developing immigration policies through hierarchies of assimilability (and, implicitly, colour), and accordingly structuring labour market entry around proxy notions of race (Carter et al., 1996).

This period also marked something of a hiatus in the development of the feminist movement. Following the passage of women suffrage (1920), there were several schisms within the movement concerning the way forward, particularly regarding the creation of an Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution. While some constituencies wanted to push the political agenda further, others seemed resolved instead to focus their attention on welfare and other social reform issues, including those that had preoccupied women of the late Victorian period, such as temperance and morality. These, particularly regarding their associations with Christian underpinnings, also entailed a pressure to return to 'traditional' feminine behaviours. This renaissance and revival of Victorian values also extended to calls to recover and protect 'authentic' masculinity, and involved in relation to more general manners and fashions an 'integration of new forms into old traditions' (Wouters, 2007, p. 171).

Nonetheless, during this period, explicit efforts to reduce the supposed 'effeminisation' of masculinity began to change in important respects. While still a major concern (principally as it related to anxieties about homosexuality), the focus among leading social scientists of the time came to shift towards a more precise and positivistic assessment of gender via the counting, measuring, and labelling of various purported dimensions of masculinity and femininity. Sociologists Lewis Terman and Catherine Miles, for example, created in the 1920s a highly influential and large-scale longitudinal study entitled *Sex and Personality* that operated under the notion that there was a psychologically normative array of traits that members of each sex should properly display, and which required proper delineation via the process of research (Terman & Miles, 1936). In a manner

expressive of more general scientific attitudes of the time, Terman and Miles assumed that individuals displayed such traits to varying degrees, and that 'normal' masculine and feminine behaviour should fall within an acceptable range, in a manner similar to an IQ result.

The focus within the emergent gender science of this period was thus upon the elucidation of purported sex-linked behavioural arrays through the employ of masculinity–femininity (M-F) scales, which applied across the sexes with rather less special attention paid to men over women than in earlier phases of its development. A key exception in this respect related to male homosexuality, which was equally problematised as it was in previous decades (see e.g. 'Homophobia Among Men' within David & Brannon, 1976); however, crucially, homosexuality was now increasingly understood as marking an outer margin: an extreme pole of a 'normal' masculine spectrum (Terman & Miles, 1936). Accordingly, male homosexuals were seen to differ from heterosexual males in the same way that heterosexual males were seen to differ from women. Overall, the rationale behind M-F scales was to 'develop an instrument which is brief, easy to administer, relatively subtle and unthreatening in context, and which will at the same time differentiate men from women and sexual deviates from normals' (Gough et al., 1952, p. 427).

While such ideas pivot on the notion of authentic and 'normal' expressions of sexuality, masculinity, and femininity, albeit across a range of behaviours, these studies also attested to a growing awareness of the social motility and contingency of gender and sexuality, and with it a challenge to crude Eugenicist and social Darwinist conceptions of sex-based behaviour.

Within more general public discourse expressing social canons of masculinity and femininity of the inter-war years, the emphasis on masculine behaviours came to shift away from ideals that valorised fighting and roughhousing among men and boys, and an emphasis on more rounded and even expressions of masculine self-control and restraint. The knee-jerk expositions of masculinity in crisis or under threat from prominent social commentators of previous decades came to give way to an increased emphasis on masculine *decorum* and moderating one's behaviours for Society. Already by the mid-1930s, leading etiquette manuals aimed at American upper classes contained a very different kind of model of masculinity from the encouragement towards playful boyish 'savagery' of earlier decade. For example, *The Correct Thing: A Guide Book of Etiquette for Young Men*, published in 1934 by William Stevens (Stevens, 1934) opens

with an anecdotal example of a young man who attended all the ‘right’ schools and had made all the ‘right’ moves, but who was denied a job because he did not stand when a woman entered the room for his interview—an expectation of ‘proper manners’ at the time. Stevens’s cautionary tale is employed to explain the purpose of his book: to ‘provide a convenient guide in good manners for young men... [as] there are many boys, even with good home backgrounds, who discover that they have no idea just what is expected of them in certain situations’ (Stevens, 1934, p. 2).

The Correct Thing is both written by a man and is entirely dedicated to the behaviour of (middle and upper class) boys and men. This runs against a longer tradition of etiquette manuals in the United States, the vast majority of which were authored and marketed to women in the periods prior. As such, *The Correct Thing* is arguably illustrative of a growing social pressure upon boys and men to regulate their own behaviour in more even and differentiated ways across a range of social spheres, with respect towards women (albeit respect expressed through patriarchal norms of deference), an increasingly important component of such behavioural standards. Stevens attests at once both to a former decline in social canons of masculine decorum and to their enduring (and likely reascendant) significance: ‘there has always been masculine protest against rules of social behaviour on the grounds that they were silly anyway, and unworthy of the consideration of a he-man. At worst they are arbitrary conventions... Such a person may have all the logic on his side, perhaps, but nothing else. Arbitrary as many social conventions are, they serve a useful purpose in smoothing the points of contact in social intercourse. Accordingly, it is an important and practical part of education to know what the rules are’ (Stevens, 1934, pp. 3–4).

Once again, we can observe that canons of masculinity in this period expressed not simply shifting balances of power between the sexes, and between established and outsider sexualities (we refer again to concerns about male homosexuality in this regard), but also between different ethnic groups, social classes, and the popular fears that variously related to these axes of inequality. The rationale for many of the rules of decorum was steeped in ideas of racial superiority that (as we have argued) had come to fruition in the decades previous period. However, these rules were now expressed unequivocally in standards of *civilisation*. For example, Stevens notes ‘There is a special lot of assorted rules which must be followed in keeping with good breeding. *Don’t manhandle other people*. Especially keep your hands off girls’ (Stevens, 1934, p. 141). These rules,

he continues, rest in fundamental courtesy and deference ‘which are part of our racial heritage and a mark of the degree of our civilization’ (Stevens, 1934, p. 4).

Other qualitative examples from the period are also suggestive of a change in sensitivities towards hypermasculine behaviours during the inter-war years. Contrary to the prior period, where, as we have seen, men like Theodore Roosevelt were lauded for their impetuous and unabashed aggressive and violent masculine characteristics, the post-depression era involved an increased pressure towards restraint expressed through behavioural canons that linked violent masculine behaviours and attitudes with lower social standing and lower intelligence.

Later in the period, in the post-war decades, there are also numerous examples of the re-ascendant notion that violent behaviours are indicative of an unrefined masculinity that needs to be tempered and tamed to allow a young male to progress towards adulthood. For instance, a prominent editorial in the *New York Times* in 1956 entitled ‘Boys—and Their Warlike Ways’ concludes that parents and other institutions need to step in to teach children proper reasons for violence and to set and enforce limits. It notes that ‘in general, the pushing, punching, brawling phase is just one of many most boys must pass through in growing up’ and that ‘providing stimulating experiences that will challenge the children’s abilities, channel their energies and give them socially acceptable opportunities to compete and cooperate in work and play together are urgently called for’ (Barclay, 1956). Clearly implied in Barclay’s editorial is the notion that fighting was something that boys did when they were not provided appropriate instruction and/or were within an ‘inappropriate’ social group.

Wider global developments in this period also had a major role in shifting sensitivities towards masculine behaviour. The rapid and prominent rise of far-right nationalist regimes in Europe and their treatment of outsider groups had become a major cause for concern in American popular media. Indeed, the explicit link created in news media of the 1930s between Nazism and the subjugation of women and a dehumanising treatment of outsiders was to prove significant and profound for shifts in the balance of power between the sexes (Anonymous, 1940; Enderis, 1933; The Associated Press, 1934). This association sedimented the idea that the West and democracy should be synonymous with increased freedom for women and better treatment by their male compatriots (see e.g. Elenore Roosevelt’s participation and assistance drafting the Universal Declaration

of Human Rights and her speech ‘Where do Human Rights Begin?’ in (Roosevelt, 1999).

Against this backdrop, a series of influential newspaper articles called explicitly to increase freedom and opportunities for women. Negatively framed reporting of Third Reich Germany and its strict enforcement of traditional realms of domesticity was a common refrain. A 1933 *New York Times* article, ‘New Reich Rejects Western Feminism: Bars Women from Politics, Business and Industry—Wants Homemakers’ serves as an exemplar in this respect. Reporting upon the appointment of Frau Paula Siber of Düsseldorf (a sole woman in the new government) to speak on behalf of womanhood in the new state, the article lamented that the place of women ‘will not be in the field of politics, for Nazi dogma has restricted the activities of German women to the kitchen, the nursery, the church and social welfare’. With a negative tone, the article also speaks of the demise of feminism within the new government which pressured strongly for a return to traditional realms of domesticity for women and, for ‘the future safety of the German race’ the call ‘for a family of five as the normal unit’ (Enderis, 1933, for exemplar shifts in Germany before and after that time see (Ernst, 2003)).

Over the next several years, further commentaries on the Nazi treatment of women were repeatedly reported. A 1934 article, for example, quoted Joseph Goebbels, the German Minister of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment, where he explicitly cautioned against gender equality saying that ‘if women were given equality in everything with men... man would naturally see in her a dangerous competitor and would fight such competition tooth and nail. Such a situation must be avoided’ (The Associated Press, 1934). However, by firmly establishing this link between such views and Nazism, this reportage came to reinforce an association between American liberty, the ‘West’, and democracy and increased freedom for women, and better treatment by their male compatriots, as core ‘civilised’ values.

With the breakout of the war in Europe, such associations were further developed and articulated, particularly in relation to popular depictions of ordinary Germans as a violence-loving and oppressive people (Koppes & Black, 1990). Such portrayals, of course, could be easily reinforced through citing Germany’s own wartime propaganda which stressed, time and again, the compound of masculinity and warfare, and which warned against the purportedly corrosive and degenerative effect of peace on manhood and male virtues. It is likely that those associations played a

significant role in shifting canons of masculinity and femininity in post-war America, and have endured in relation to progressive concerns about hypermasculine behaviours to this day.

3 CONCLUSION

It is noteworthy that despite such historically firm associations between hypermasculine behaviours and attitudes and totalising regimes, and, conversely the historically enduring notion that progressiveness, freedom, democracy, and American distinctiveness might be defined in opposition to such attitudes and behaviours, over the past decade or so, there has again arguably been a resurgence of hypermasculine behaviours among certain social groups in United States society. A recent exemplar in this respect is provided in a recording of the current United States president Donald Trump, who infamously described his tendency to ‘grab by the pussy’ (BBC News, 2016) women he found attractive. The public revelation and reportage of this recording ultimately did not fatally, nor perhaps even significantly, damage Trump’s chances of electoral success. Indeed, there is some evidence that it actually *improved* his standing among certain sections of the United States electorate (see e.g. Dunn, 2020). It arguably did so precisely through its bolstering Trump’s status as an unabapologetic misogynist: a ‘full blooded’ male, as he would have it, who is not afraid of ‘authentic’ masculinity, and who stands for a more general renaissance of hegemonic values that represent the interests of (white, male, cis) Americans. Indeed, Trump’s political campaign centred on the supposed restoration of a former American ‘greatness’ that (as he was careful discursively to contrive) could be seen as under threat variously by migrants, liberal progressive reformers, and through the panoply of ways in which women, people of colour, and other ‘outsiders’ have hitherto been afforded seemingly too much hold over the levers of power. Sociogenetically, we might again speculate that such developments extend considerably beyond Trump and his political entourage and towards a much wider set of figurational developments involving escalating fears—here concerning an authentic and once ‘great’ American canon of masculinity under threat from a range of outsiders.

In this way, and as we have sought to argue both conceptually and through our analytical extensions, we might understand *hypermasculinisation as a process entailing rising and falling expressions of ‘canons’ of masculinity that are bound up with shifting power figurations involving a multitude*

of social groups. As such, 'hypermasculinity' is not a 'thing' or even solely a 'discourse', but rather is *a process simultaneously embedded and expressed in a range of practices that can be understood to emerge, ascend, and also decline under particular social conditions involving both perceived and actual shifts in the power figurations of established and outsider groups*. We can witness certain facets of hypermasculinity enduring across shifting social canons of masculinity more generally, and also we might observe rising and falling levels of contestation of such canonical attitudes and behaviours in relation, almost invariably, to a range and panoply of established–outsider figurations.

Ultimately, a much more extensive analysis of the longer-term sociogenetic ascendancy and demise of hypermasculine behaviours and attitudes is necessary properly to substantiate some of the arguments that we offer, albeit tentatively, in this chapter. Nonetheless, we hope to have demonstrated the potential ultimately of viewing hypermasculinisation as a long-term process, in particular to better understanding and anticipating those conditions and dynamics that foster and/or impede such behaviours and attitudes among specific social groups.

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Misogyny, Inadequacy, and Violence: A Process-Sociological Approach to Incels

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I INTRODUCTION

A great deal of contemporary academic and media discourse suggests that we are living in anxious, ‘liquid’ times (Habermas, 1976; Bauman, 1997) marked by intense moral panics (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2010) and symptomatic outrage or ‘callout’ cultures (Anderson, 2018), illustrated by the identity politics that frame contemporary discussions of masculinity. Some argue that masculinity is ‘in crisis’ (Clare, 2010; Horrocks, 1994; Malin, 2005), wherein men are adrift in late modern societies, unable to locate their roles due to the institutionalisation of feminist cultural sensibilities,

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changes to family structures, and the development of neoliberal economies. These factors, it is argued, contribute to changes to the ‘cultural idea’ of what it contemporarily means to ‘be a man’ (Connell, 2005; Morgan, 2006; Messner, 2016; Ging, 2017). The ‘problem’ with men has not evaded scholarly attention. Empirical research spanning several decades has focused on rising suicide rates among men (Alston, 2012; Bryant & Garnham, 2015), male academic under-achievement (see e.g. Epstein, 1998; Frost et al., 2002), and the impact pornography has on men’s attitudes towards intimacy and sex (see e.g. Attwood, 2005; Flood, 2009; Sanders, 2013). Flexible work, a steady decline in the demand for manual labour, single-parent households and female contraception, and a reduction in inequality between men and women have all contributed to the decline of a ‘patriarchal model’ of society (Morgan, 2006).

In response to this perceived patriarchal decline, contemporary men’s movements emerged during the latter half of the twentieth century, seeking to mirror the emancipatory impact of women’s liberation. While the original intention of the contemporary men’s movement may have been ‘principled’, it has since fragmented into pro and anti-feminist factions (Messner, 1997, p. 40). Gender theorists posit that antifeminist groups are increasingly coalescing online in antagonistic ‘men’s rights’ spaces on the Internet, wherein problematic sexist and violent discourses are nurtured, echoed, and encouraged (see e.g. Ging, 2017; Nagle, 2015), purporting to open men’s eyes to the supposed misandry and brainwashing inherent in contemporary feminist and post-feminist approaches. This discourse is common in male-dominated online spaces such as 4Chan and Reddit, where praise is often heaped upon violent male mass-murderers Elliot Rodger, Alek Minassian, and Brenton Tarrant—figures regarded by ‘outsiders’ to the manosphere as dangerous icons of ‘toxic masculinity’ (Haider, 2016, p. 557). These infamous figures have inspired some men to take up further hate campaigns against women—who are held as responsible for these men’s inability to form sexual and romantic connections. Men who take up this problematic position increasingly self-identify and are being labelled as ‘incels’ (involuntary celibate), by the media and in popular discourse. While the term incel is gaining currency in social and critical commentary, we argue that the precise definition of who and what constitutes an incel and what contributes to the emergence of incels remains up for debate.

A central aim of this chapter therefore is to investigate how a focus on long-term social processes can aide our understanding of the recent

development of the incel phenomenon. This approach involves a reorientation of the problem from the philosophically orientated question: ‘why are some men incels’, to ask: ‘what are the social processes that have contributed to the development of incels?’ The empirical literature on incels is newly emergent and while interdisciplinary, we argue it so far lacks analysis investigating longer-term processes that have contributed to the emergence of incels. Instead, our chapter puts forward a process-oriented approach as a way to understand how the incel movement has developed over time and in relation to its antecedents. We do this by suggesting several areas of concern based on some early observations of the academic literature and some preliminary research on incels. In particular, we draw on the work of Cas Wouters, and seek to build upon his work on ‘informalisation’ and the changes to behavioural standards relating to sexual and relational intimacy over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first century. Specifically, we posit how these processes may have contributed to the recent emergence of incels. Our discussion below by no means seeks to claim that we already have the answers to understanding the incel phenomenon, but rather, we believe that our lines of enquiry represent a novel jumping off point for sociological research in this area. Accordingly, we propose that the long-term development of incels might be understood by focusing on the following four interrelated questions:

1. Processes governing behavioural standards in many societies have involved a shift from a dominance of overt external constraints (e.g. the use of set, formal rules governing relations between men and women) towards internal self-constraints (e.g. nebulous, rapidly changing, often contradictory and informal rules governing relations between men and women) and have contributed to forms of self-consciousness that Elias (2012a, pp. 512–19, 2012b, pp. 114–15) referred to as *homo clausus* (a sense of an internal self, locked inside a body that feels impacted by an external social world). Accordingly, to what extent has this contributed to incels’ feelings of isolation and a sense they (and men more generally) are under attack from women and feminists?
2. Relatedly, to what extent have long-term social processes contributed to an inability among some men to successfully navigate a social world with greater opacity and complexity? And have such processes contributed to feelings of inadequacy and low social status among those labelled as incels?

3. To what extent is the emergence of the incel phenomenon a manifestation of an integration conflict, in which some men feel fear and a loss of status in relation to women, and in the case of incels, actively blame women and feminism for their real or perceived loss of status and meaning?
4. Relatedly, to what extent have those who have come to be labelled as incels lack emotional identification with women? How might this have come about and how might this reduced scope for emotional identification towards women contribute to incels' stigmatisation and dehumanisation of women, while at the same time, there being a concurrent stigmatisation and dehumanisation of those labelled as incels?

Before investigating these issues, it is firstly useful to discuss some of their context and how a process-sociological approach is able to shed new light onto this issue.

2 INCELS: DEFINITIONS AND TENSIONS

Given the slew of media coverage on 'toxic masculinity' and gendered violence in recent years, incels appear to many to be a contemporary phenomenon. Despite this interest, demographic data on incels in peer-reviewed outlets is limited (cf. Beauchamp, 2019; Hoffman et al., 2020). A recent, self-reported survey conducted by the administrators of the incels.com web forum of approximately 700 users suggests that most incels (approximately 63 percent) identify as young white men aged between 18 and 25, with low self-worth (SergeantIncel, 2020). In the limited available empirical literature, incels are defined as heterosexual men whose sexual advances upon women are undesired and unreciprocated (Murray, 2016; Jaki et al., 2019; Ging, 2017). This deprivation contributes to incels harbouring a deep hatred of women, but also the men whom incels perceive are undeserving recipients of women's emotional and physical intimacy (*ibid.*, 2017). Women are positioned by incels as 'banshees' who exploit an 'unfair hierarchy of attraction' to humiliate and exclude 'average' or 'below average' (looking) men who fail to live up to ('the system's') superficial standards (Ford, 2019, p. 249). This is illustrated by Hoffman et al. (2020, p. 567):

At the top of this (hierarchy) are the idealised men and women respectively referred to as “Chads” and “Stacys”. So-called “normies” are in the middle, with the lowly incels languishing at the bottom. In incel lore, a small number of Chads attract the majority of women, leaving only the apparently unattractive women for the normies, and none for the incels. Incels significantly also distinguish themselves from normies not just by supposedly inferior physical appearance, but by their belief that they have gained privileged insights that normies do not see: that most women are attracted only to Chads, and that if one did not ‘win’ the genetic lottery, they are destined for mediocrity, social isolation, and loneliness.

Feeling isolated and abandoned, incels coalesce online and wallow in their loathing and self-loathing alike in web forums and social networking sites such as 4chan and Reddit. Online discussions in the manosphere are therefore aimed at ‘enlightening’ men to the perils of contemporary feminism and femininity and encourage disenfranchised men to take the ‘red pill’. This supposed awakening is framed as an empowering moment, one which arms men with the knowledge to manipulate the gender hierarchy (which has chads at the top as alphas and incels at the bottom as betas), and its standards, to their advantage. Online, this ranges from discussions about ‘pick up tactics’ to rationalising rape and domestic violence (Solon, 2017).

It is the ease in which the latter occurs, and the propensity for such discussions to contribute to real world acts of mass violence, which is of particular concern to the media, scholars, and wider public. In 2014, Elliot Rodger committed the first recognised incident of ‘incel violence’. Prior to his shooting rampage and suicide near the University of California Santa Barbara campus, Rodger wrote a manifesto and uploaded a monologue to his YouTube channel, declaring his incredulity at and hatred towards women for rejecting his sexual advances. Rodger’s manifesto, video, and actions have helped inspire other ‘disenfranchised’ young men to commit similar acts of gendered violence since. In 2018, Alek Minassian drove a rental van through a busy business district in Toronto, killing 10—most of whom were women. Prior to his arrest, Minassian had posted online ‘the Incel Rebellion has already begun! We will overthrow all Chads and Stacys! All hail the Supreme Gentleman Elliot Rodger!’ (Wendling, 2018). There have been several acts of incel-violence since 2014, and fears are rising that a trend is forming, with some beginning to frame incels in terms of terrorism and radicalisation (Ling, 2020; Hoffman et al., 2020).

In the first example of incel mass violence in the UK, 22-year-old Jake Davidson murdered five people in Plymouth, including a three-year old girl and his own mother. Davidson had posted on incel fora previously, stating, among other things, his victimhood, lack of friends and support, and contempt for people he regarded as successful.

While anxieties concerning incels are contemporaneous, the notion of ‘involuntary celibates’ predates any phenomena such as the ‘manosphere’, the #MeToo movement, or recent acts of violence. The term involuntary celibate was first used in 1993 by a Canadian university student who built the website *Alana’s Involuntary Celibacy Project* (Baker, 2016). The website was originally intended to be a ‘home’ online for ‘those struggling to form loving relationships—a friendly place where lonely, like-minded people could interact in a time that predated modern social media platforms’ (Taylor, 2018). Furthermore, involuntary celibates are not only men, with many women self-identifying themselves as ‘femcels’, defined here as women unable to secure intimacy or relationships due to a self-perceived attractiveness deficit. One possible reason the discussion on incels has been focused on men is that there has not been any ‘femcel’ violence to date (research on ‘femcels’ is non-existent at the time of writing this chapter). Another is the belief that few do not readily accept the notion that women *would* be involuntarily celibate in the first place, given stereotypes and conventions around male and female expectations and motivations for sexual and romantic intimacy (Mahdawi, 2020).

2.1 *Gender Theory and Process-Sociological Approaches*

The academic literature on incels, while limited, tends to share a particular characteristic. That is, it tends to focus on issues associated with ‘gender politics’, and ideas around ‘hegemonic masculinity’, ‘patriarchy’, and neoliberalism (see Ging, 2017; Banet-Weiser & Braitch, 2019; Bates, 2020). These are regarded as the underlying relations from which present-day misogyny and the incel phenomenon have emerged. While such approaches have contributed to important insights in helping to understand incels, we believe that a process-sociological approach can build on this and provide new and fruitful considerations of what incels are and how they have come about in the context of emergent long-term social processes.

One central aspect for this discussion is how gendered power relations are understood. There is a tendency among gender theorists, who draw heavily on poststructuralist approaches, to understand power as only

involving relations of dominance and subordination. Instead, we draw on Elias and the idea that power is a fundamental component of all human relationships (Elias, 2012b, pp. 87–89) and, therefore, can be understood in terms of power ratios and balances between individuals and groups. All relationships, therefore, include aspects of constraint and enablement for individuals and groups. This has important implications for our understanding of gender relations and the development of incels within the context of gendered power dynamics. For example, according to Liston: ‘Gender is a function of relations between, and among, males and females’, and ‘gender relations are characterised by an intermingling of andrarchic and gynarchic’ relational dynamics (Liston, 2007, p. 626). Accordingly, the ‘variable functional interdependence of the sexes’ can be both ‘enabling’ and ‘constraining’, rather than simply constraining. However, over the long-term and to generalise, women have tended to have been more constrained and less enabled than men, and men more enabled and less constrained than women (see also Ernst, 2022).

2.2 *The Primacy of Processes*

It is important to be clear about what we are exploring in our research. As suggested above, central is an emphasis on long-term social processes. Accordingly, to paraphrase Goudsblom (1977, p. 6), human beings are born into relationships of interdependency, and the figurations they form with one another engender emergent dynamics, which cannot be reduced to individual actions and motivations. This contrasts to what Elias (2010, p. 178, 2012a, pp. 512–26, 2012b, pp. 114–115) calls *homo clausus* forms of self-consciousness, in which individuals experience themselves as isolated beings separated from one another, and from a society existing somewhere ‘out there’, beyond ‘the individual’. *Homo clausus* self-images have been pervasive in Western social, philosophical, and political thought (most clearly demonstrated by Descartes’ *cogito* or Kant’s idea of the autonomous social agent), with the idea of the adult individual simply being able to use her or his (but usually his) ‘internal’ and ‘eternal’ reason in order to understand the world. This has become manifested in much sociology and ‘social theory’, as well as political ideas such as rugged individualism associated with liberalism and to some extent with the emergence of identity politics.

As opposed to this *homo clausus* understanding of the world, Elias suggests a *homines aperti* model of human societies. This involves ‘open’

pluralities of people, who form webs of interdependence, which integrate vertically and horizontally—across both time and space. That is, figurations are both relational and processual, and people's interdependence varies—people can be more directly or less directly connected to one another in terms of their interdependence. This interdependence comes about through the mutual fulfilment of the social conditions for existence, including food and shelter, security and protection, affection, knowledge and control, and direction. In these contexts, chains of interdependence can be long or short, and also vary in their complexity. Elias (2010) used the relationships between personal pronouns to demonstrate the interconnectedness of people. That is, there is no 'I' without a 'we', no 'we' without a 'they', no 'me' without a 'you', no 'individual' without 'society', and so on. These relationships develop over time, as do the positions of individuals within these changing webs or tissues of relations. Accordingly, it is possible to examine the directions of change and how such changes involve a multitude of varying constraints and enablements of groups and individuals. This allows for an examination of the development of gender relations generally and of incels specifically.

2.3 *Homo masculinus and Identity Politics*

As suggested in our four central research concerns, the development of incels in relation to the development of *homo clausus* self-images, especially in terms of experiencing the social world as external and potentially hostile, may provide a fruitful line of enquiry. That is, *homo clausus* self-images involve experiencing the world as divided between 'me' locked up in 'my body', as an autonomous self, with 'society' existing as something 'outside', which is independent of 'me'. Society is then felt to act upon the self. This is exemplified via the 'basic pattern of the geocentric' or 'dartboard model' of society (Elias, 2012b, p. 8; Dunning & Hughes, 2020, p. 269), with the individual at the centre, circled by concentric rings representing different layers of society, such as family, school, industry, state, etc. This *homo clausus* form of self-consciousness develops as part of intertwining sociogenetic and psychogenetic processes, which were first discussed by Elias in *On the Process of Civilisation* (2012a [1939]). Elias (2012a) suggests that state formation processes, involving the monopolisation of violence and taxation (which meant intra-state violence was increasingly proscribed and 'confined to barracks'), contributed to a growing social pressure towards self-constraint—a kind of internalisation of external

social controls that pressures individuals to curb spontaneous feelings and behaviours and in so doing creates a ‘wall of affects’ (2012a, p. 77) between individuals. It is these processes that are central to developing conceptions of a dividing line between the self and society—these are feelings of being ‘cut-off’ from a society which nevertheless exerts control on the self from outside. We contend that this *homo clausus* form of experiencing oneself appears to be a significant manifestation of the way incels experience themselves.

These processes may also be crucial to the development of identity politics, especially the kinds of ideology and pseudo-science that incels draw upon in their understanding of their ‘we- and I-images’. We suggest that incels belong to a growing number of groups that embrace identity politics, including those based on ‘whiteness’, ‘masculinity’, and ‘heterosexuality’ (see Keskinen, 2013), and we explore the extent to which the development of identity politics is a manifestation of *homo clausus* self-images—incel identity appears to be one of *homo masculinus*. Accordingly, identity politics was historically the preserve of the far-right and racists, who based their politics on their belief in white supremacy and identity. This kind of identity politics has also been taken on by some sections of the left (Malik, 2020), whose practices have in turn been taken on by contemporary far-right groups in a type of *bricolage* (Kølvraa & Forchtner, 2019). This applies to incels, who claim their identities are under threat in a similar fashion to the way many other far-right groups fear their ‘white cultural identities’ are under threat.

Incels set their own self-image up against a range of other groups, but predominantly against feminists, women in general and men and women whom they believe are successful in finding sexual partners. To put this in process-sociological terms: the relational nexuses of which incels form a part involve a complex web of established–outsider relations, in which there are various circles of emotional identification. However, these forms of emotional identification appear not to extend from incels’ ‘we-group’ towards women, feminists, or ‘Chads’ and ‘Staceys’, but only to one another. Likewise, it appears that emotional identification in this context does not extend the other way either—towards incels from other groups that form part of these relational nexuses. Incels, accordingly, have developed as a highly demarcated group, who separate themselves from others based on what they regard as their own low social status and on their inability to form romantic and sexual relationships. Our research examines whether or not this demarcation has contributed to a ‘disidentification’

(De Swaan, 2003) with those who incels regard as higher status in their 'imagined' romantic and sexual hierarchy, as well as those who they blame for their low status, such as feminists, and if these processes of disidentification have developed in the other direction as well.

3 INCELS AND INFORMALISATION

While incels appear to have a *homo masculinus* self-image, a consideration of how such self-images can develop as part of longer-term social processes is necessary in order to help develop a sociological understanding of incels. It is, therefore, important to consider this problem within the broader context of shifting power dynamics between men and women. This is not to say that men and women form two groups in opposition to one another, but that they are part of multi-dimensional relational nexuses in which balances of power, relating to gender, among other interdependent groups, are of central significance. As Elias (2009, p. 272) suggests, the problems of men and women, while different, cannot be understood as separate, but must be regarded as 'interdependent and inseparable'. Accordingly, relations between men and women often involve changing codes of behaviour in which there are various alterations in the balances between external social constraints and 'internal' psychical constraints—for example, in some cases behavioural standards between men and women become self-evident, while at the same time, how men and women ought to conduct themselves with one another requires certain degrees of 'external' and conscious regulation, especially in relation to sexual and intimate relationships. In other words, while aspects of how to behave in these contexts are generally taken for granted and need no explanation for those involved, there are times when guidance is sought and provided, as the 'correct' forms of conduct appear opaque. A contemporary example of this is the use of dating advice from magazines or online sources which offer instructions for the right etiquette for how men and women should behave with each other in these situations.

Consequently, part of our research involves examining the shifting balances of formalisation and informalisation in behavioural codes between men and women to allow us to begin to shed some light onto some aspects of how behavioural standards and external and internal constraints might play a part in the development of incels and problematic gendered behaviours. This is because a central feature of 'inceldom' is related to how they conduct themselves with women (often drawing on or in opposition to

so-called ‘pick-up artist’ behavioural codes) as part of their quest for intimate and sexual relationships, and what incels see as a failure to develop such relationships.

This has developed as part of broader social processes. In most Western states (and indeed elsewhere) processes involving the formalisation of behavioural standards lost their dominance to processes involving the informalisation of behavioural standards (See Elias, 2013; Wouters, 2004, 2007, 2019). Over the course of the twentieth century, as people in Western societies became more functionally and complexly interdependent, and the power gradients between various groups became less steep, it demanded a greater fine-tuning of behaviour, forcing people to manoeuvre themselves in increasingly flexible and sensitive ways, and according to more flexible guidelines, thus opening up a wide range of acceptable behavioural options (Wouters, 2004, 2007, 2019). However, these changes did not make behaviour easier. Rather, this placed greater strain on the self-steering capacities of individuals, as people have had to negotiate an increasingly complex multitude of options, and so have come to depend on social skills that could no longer be learned on the basis of simply being obedient to authorities and fixed rules (*ibid.*). As processes of informalisation have gained ascendancy over highly formalised codes of conduct, there has been a much greater mixing of different social strata, and a diminishing of contrasts in the behavioural standards and psychical make-up of different individuals. This has contributed to a subsequent shift in the psychical self-steering apparatus of individuals, which has involved a move from conscience to consciousness (Wouters, 2007, p. 213, 2019, p. 161). Processes of informalisation have tended to dominate in Western societies and increasingly across the globe since the 1960s. This has included processes in which former outsiders have become part of a range of emancipatory movements, including most relevantly to this chapter, women and young people (Wouters, 2007, p. 185).

Taking these processes of informalisation into account, it appears that those who identify as incels tend to be either unable or unwilling to ‘successfully’ negotiate the complex multitude of options associated with developing intimate and sexual relationships with women. But as we have already suggested, they experience this as problematic to their self-image. They see themselves as victims in a world in which they see their rightful position as men as having been undermined by women. Accordingly, they have developed a misogynistic, anti-feminist ideology based on pseudoscience in order to explain their perceived low status and self-image. Their

position in relation to women appears to involve high levels of ambivalence, in which intimate and sexual relations with women are a goal as a way of enhancing their status, and yet they also express a hatred of women. At the same time, incels desire a return to what they see as a 'lost golden age', in which gender-related power dynamics meant that women tended to be more subordinate to and more constrained in relation to men, and men less constrained in relation to women. These relational dynamics involved the more formalised and fixed rules governing behaviour between men and women already mentioned. This harking back can be conceptualised as an example of groups like incels desiring 'ontological security', and is evident in other extreme ideologies such as those relating to nationalism, the far right, and Salafi-jihadism among others. This can be understood in the contemporary requirement for negotiating the more differentiated behavioural codes mentioned above, in which there is less security in terms of potential outcomes, and needs and wishes are not met.

4 SOCIAL CODES AND CHANGES IN THE BALANCES OF POWER

These more complex and differentiated social codes did not simply appear out of nowhere. They are tied to changes in balances of power from a highly unequal position to a less unequal position. Accordingly, it would be useful at this point to briefly touch upon an important feature of declining power potential of certain 'established' groups, which we feel is relevant to this chapter, and more broadly our research. Elias (2008, p. 30) suggests it is possible for the patterns of self-restraint of higher status groups to break down as their power superiority crumbles and their belief in their own superiority diminishes. Such processes often involve members of the 'established' group maintaining a 'fantasy we-image' of themselves and their high-status position in relation to other groups. When the reality of their diminishing status position becomes apparent to them, they tend to mourn their lost greatness, and experience a kind of 'reality shock'. Outsider groups or rising strata who do not share the 'established' group's norms are seen as problematic and potential enemies, and not sharing their norms is regarded as an attack on the established group's we-image and we-ideal. They seek to repel what they see as threats to their status by continuous attack and humiliation of the outsider group (Elias, 2008, pp. 29–30; see also Dunning, 2019). Based on our preliminary

observations, incels appear to see themselves among the vanguard of men's rights, protecting what they regard as traditional male superiority in the face of attacks by women, feminists, and men who have not taken the 'red pill'. Their approach is inherently fantasy-laden and highly partisan, as they consider relations between men and women as binary and oppositional. We suggest that these broader changes in power balances provide an important line of enquiry in seeking an understanding of the wider picture of which incels form a part.

While men have tended to have had greater power chances relative to women over many centuries at least, this varies both temporally and spatially, and is dependent on the differing power dynamics between other forms of categorisation and social groups, as well as changing over the life-course of individuals. It is equally important to recognise that changes do exist, and that arguments that balances of power between men and women have not shifted in favour of the latter are problematic, and tend to be indicative of explanations that are guided by political motivations. Conversely, Elias shows in *The Court Society* (2006 [1969]) that relations between the sexes in Europe have been relatively equal in certain spheres (see Elias, 2006, p. 261; Mennell, 1992, p. 133). For example, during the period of the Renaissance, women had greater power chances in courtly circles than in other social spheres at the time. In this period and in these social circles, he suggests, people were developing greater self-reflection, 'distanciation', and 'self-constraints':

A characteristic symptom of this major advance in the development of self-constraint, this reduction in spontaneity, this civilising detachment, as far as relations between men and women are concerned, is the development of romantic love both as a real occurrence and perhaps more as a cult and ideal. Whatever other factors may have been involved, the distancing of the sexes by armour of self-constraint, manifested sometimes in the form of good manners, sometimes in the form of conscience or reflection—in short, a postponing of the enjoyment of love and a melancholy satisfaction in painful joys—all these, with varying emphases, are integral elements in the complex of feeling called romantic love. (Elias, 2006, p. 261)

A key point to take from this is that while balances of power between men and women in courtly circles, in many respects, were relatively equal, this manifested itself in the development of codes of conduct in relation to the ideals of romantic love. It is our contention that codes governing the

relations between the sexes in present-day Western societies are also based on the ideals and assumptions that men and women have in relation to intimate and sexual relationships. However, unlike the courtly circles of the Renaissance, these ideals and assumptions are indicative of a society today with a much higher degree of figurational complexity. This process is indicative of Elias's (2012a, p. 422) discussion of *Diminishing contrasts, increasing varieties*, in which the balances of power between different strata overall were diminishing as groups become more functionally interdependent. These changes involve shifts in the balances of power between established and outsider groups, including men and women, owners of capital and workers, older and younger generations and European societies and their former colonies, and so on (Elias, 2013, p. 27). This process of 'functional democratisation' (Elias, 2012b, pp. 63–64) in which the relative power chances of the kinds of groups mentioned above begin to move towards diminishing inequality is the same process alluded to above in which different groups become more functionally interdependent for a range of basic needs, including food and shelter, security, affection, knowledge, and control and direction. While this process developed, codes of conduct from all social strata have become infused with one another. In turn, this has contributed to an expansion of the kinds of behaviour allowed—to increasing varieties. In other words, while inequalities between many groups have reduced over the long term, this has contributed to a much broader choice in terms of behaviours that are allowable, except for displays of superiority, including violence, which have become more strictly forbidden. This places greater psychological pressure on people to find ways to steer a course in which they are able to satisfy their needs and wishes, but without contravening related behavioural standards. As suggested, one of our initial questions is to ask whether or not those who identify as incels find it particularly difficult to negotiate this balance, especially as men, over the long term, may have become more constrained in relation to romantic and sexual relationships with women. This potential difficulty in self-steering may well be further compounded by the self-experience of *homo-clausus* or even *homo masculinus* consciousness.

5 AMBIVALENCE AND INTEGRATION CONFLICTS

Wouters (2019, p. 139) has highlighted the relationship between diminishing contrasts and increasing varieties with processes of informalisation and draws attention to Elias's discussion of '*open or latent ambivalence*' to

explore this. While Wouters and Elias's discussion of ambivalence focuses on changing power differentials between states and social classes, we believe it is also of relevance to our discussion. Accordingly, as social functions and interests become more complexly interwoven as part of processes of increasing functional interdependence, the behaviours and feelings of people caught in these webs change to 'a mixture of muted affection and muted dislike in varying proportions and nuances' (Elias, 2012a, pp. 352–353; see also Wouters, 2019, p. 139). What this means for our research is to ask to what extent do incels hold forms of open or latent ambivalence towards women? As part of this, we explore a contradiction that appears to be central to incel-dom. That is, why do they hold a desire for intimacy and sexual relationships with women, while at the same time express loathing for women, and for movements associated with the equalisation of power differentials between men and women. This relates to our key questions (3) and (4) concerning integration conflicts (see Wouters, 2007, p. 196, 2019 and Linklater, 2016, p. 420), and a reduction in the scope for emotional identification between incels and women.

Accordingly, an earlier example of an integration conflict between men and women, and a reduction in the scope for emotional identification between men and women is identified by E. Dunning in his work on sport (in Elias & Dunning, 2008, pp. 248–249), which highlights a number of parallels with the kinds of rhetoric about women posted on incel fora. Dunning suggests that expressions of misogyny, homophobia, and aggressive masculinity, which are apparent in many Rugby songs, came about in the context of relatively slight, yet significant equalising shifts in the balance of power between men and women (particularly among the middle classes) from the second half of the nineteenth century. Dunning demonstrates how these songs often involved the symbolic representation of sexually powerful women, but who are both mocked and dealt with violently or aggressively. Accordingly:

Nothing could be more revealing of the function of these songs in symbolically expressing—but also, perhaps, to some extent symbolically reducing—the fear of women who were experienced as powerful and demanding. Such fears are likely to have grown commensurately with the factual increase in women's power. (Elias & Dunning, 2008, pp. 249–250)

As suggested, there appear to be significant parallels with Dunning's observations here and the misogyny incels express towards women today. That is, it appears that factual increases in women's power potential is contributing to fears among incels of a loss of status and meaning for them. Relatedly, these fears appear to be contributing to the kinds of fantasies, conspiracies, and pseudoscience that form a major part of incel ideology. At the same time, the development of incels could be an example of a men's movement mirroring what Wouters (2019, p. 67) has referred to as an 'emancipation cramp'. This was experienced in the women's sexual liberation movement and involved fears around expressing oneself as a sexual subject. This, suggests Wouters, was highlighted especially in the anti-pornography movement of the 1980s, in which many women saw men as both the origin and solution of this particular problem. Incels appear to mirror this. But rather than an emancipation cramp, their unwillingness to accept women as sexual subjects is more of an 'accommodation cramp', as they see women merely as objects to be dominated by men. Similarly, they regard women as both the origin and solution to their problems, again highlighting their latent ambivalence towards women.

6 EXPANDING/CONTRACTING SPHERES OF EMOTIONAL IDENTIFICATION AND THE LUST BALANCE

The development of fantasy-based knowledge by incels about feminism, women, and practices associated with sexual and intimate relations is also indicative of processes in which spans of emotional identification with other groups either expands or recedes. Such processes involve changes in the level of moral concern for other groups (see Dunning & Hughes, 2020), and was also apparent in E. Dunning's observations of aggressive masculinity expressed in Rugby songs, discussed above. In the case of incels in relation to women, it appears that their scope for emotional identification in relation to women has receded. At a general level, the retreat to narrower spheres of emotional identification is related to growing fears among groups. Therefore, it is important to consider to what extent incels' perceived low social status as 'betas', and the fears they have over what they perceive to be the loss of status for men more generally, contribute to a reduction in emotional identification with women. This reduction of emotional identification with women appears to run against broader level processes, in which over the longer term, as human groups become more

complexly interdependent, spheres of emotional identification have tended to expand. These changes towards greater emotional identification have been apparent between men and women, particularly since the 1960s in Western states. Wouters (2004, 2007, 2019) has explored processes whereby changes in the balances of power between men and women have shifted in an equalising direction and how this process has contributed to the sexual emancipation of women, in which as groups and individuals they increasingly became sexual subjects as well as sexual objects. As Wouters suggests:

From the 1960s onwards, topics and practices such as premarital sex, sexual variations beyond the missionary position, unmarried cohabitation, adultery, fornication, extramarital affairs, jealousy, homosexuality, pornography, teenage sex, abortion, exchange of partners, paedophilia, incest and so on—all part of a wider process of sexualisation—implied repeated uprooting confrontations with the traditional lust balance. People were confronted with the lust-balance question more frequently and intensely than ever before. (Wouters, 2019, p. 58)

Incels, like everyone else, are confronted with having to understand and negotiate the ‘lust-balance’. In fact, their apparent inability to successfully negotiate the lust balance is what defines this group to itself. Wouters (2019, p. 59) adds that in the period between the 1880s and 1960s the ‘longing for sex’ and the ‘longing for enduring relational intimacy’ were not strongly integrated. This changed as the balance of power between men and women changed over the course of the twentieth century, in which there was a shift towards less inequality. The change for men was towards an ‘eroticisation and sensualisation of sex’. ‘Male sexual pleasure came to depend more strongly upon the sensual or erotic bond with the sex partner, that is, upon relational intimacy.’ They also began to experience women as ‘sexual subjects’ and not just ‘sexual objects’ (Wouters, 2019, p. 60). The change for women was different—it involved the ‘sexualisation of love’, and being a ‘sexual subject’, as well as a ‘sexual object’.

According to Wouters, sexual relations between men and women over the course of the twentieth century have tended to involve greater degrees of emotional identification, in which there has been a shift in experiencing the opposite sex as sexual subjects more than as sexual objects.

[Men] were squeezed between, on the one hand, their longing for an enduring intimacy, becoming subject earlier and more strongly to more or less rigorous limitations such as the likelihood or threat of desertion and divorce; and, on the other hand, their longing to satisfy their own sexuality, becoming increasingly dependent upon their talent for arousing and stimulating a woman's sexual desires. (Wouters, 2019, p. 69)

Despite this overall shift towards a greater degree of emotional identification between men and women, there have been processes in the opposite direction, as is demonstrated by E. Dunning (in Elias & Dunning, 2008) above, and as appears to be the case with incels. That is, when groups come to fear that the values, symbols, and more general way of life that they see as theirs is under threat, there is a tendency for some members of those groups to 'retreat' to narrower spans of emotional identification and to a focus on primary social groups. It appears from incel discourse that incels only regard women as sexual objects, to be possessed and used to fulfil men's own desires for intimacy and sex—potentially evidence of a reduction in emotional identification towards women. At the same time, the scope for emotional identification between incels appears to have widened, facilitated by developments in communications technology. Incels seem to regard themselves as sexual subjects and believe that they should be entitled to sexual and relational intimacy with women. In some cases, at least, incels have adapted aspects of emancipatory discourses associated with the sexual revolution. In particular, this is manifested in their willingness to talk openly and publicly about their sexual and relational inadequacies. This, as suggested above, appears to be part of the tendency of groups who engage in identity politics, and can be seen elsewhere, for example, among far-right groups who have taken on some of the aesthetics and sensibilities of left-wing groups.

7 CONCLUSION

We contend in this chapter that a fuller understanding of incels can only be achieved if they are considered as part of long-term developmental changes in the balances of power between men and women. As we have shown above, there are a number of important lines of enquiry to explore in this context: long-term developments, especially in Western states, that have involved shifts from external constraints towards internal self-constraints have contributed to the development of *homo clausus* forms of

self-consciousness. Questions arise as to what extent has this process contributed to the development of identity politics and the sense that particular identities are under threat and are being attacked from outside? In the case of incels, to what extent have these processes contributed to their feelings of being attacked by women and feminists and the development of a *homo masculinus* identity?

At the same time, changes in the balances of power between men and women, as part of growing functional interdependence between a range of groups, manifests itself in diminishing contrasts (of power) and increasing varieties (of identity and habitus). As part of this process, codes of conduct have changed from more formalised codes to more informalised codes, and external social constraints shift towards an emphasis on internal self-constraints, and greater pressure is placed on the psychological self-steering capacities of individuals as they negotiate a wider range of complex social codes which have a greater degree of opacity. This opacity of social codes and the greater emphasis on self-steering capabilities appears to be contributing to feelings of inadequacy and low social status among those who identify and are labelled as incels.

Concurrently, self-proclaimed incels often claim that their status and identities as men are under threat. Incels seek to counter this through fantasies about returning to a 'lost golden past' in which women were subordinate to men and the codes governing behaviour between men and women were less opaque. Incels' central claim is that such a return would counter their self-proclaimed genetic inferiority, which they suggest, until the emergence of feminism, did not play a significant part in such men finding intimate and sexual partners. While incels wish to have intimate and sexual relationships with women, they also have deeply misogynistic beliefs. Therefore, it appears that incels harbour open or latent ambivalence towards women, in the context of equalising power potential. Additionally, the emergence of the incel phenomenon appears to be a manifestation of an integration conflict, in which some men feel and fear a loss of status in relation to women, and in the case of incels actively blame women and feminism for this either real or perceived loss of status and meaning.

Finally, incels seem to only recognise women as objects of their desires for a sexual and intimate partner, while at the same time, they see themselves as sexual subjects and the victims of feminism. Bearing this in mind, incels appear to have a reduced emotional identification towards women. This apparent reduced scope for emotional identification towards women

appears to contribute to incels' stigmatisation and dehumanisation of women, and in some (so far rare) cases this contributes to incel violence against women.

While this chapter remains at this point speculative, we see it as a means of orientating research on incels (including our own), opening up some key lines of enquiry. We have discussed a number of social processes, which we believe are applicable to the issue following our initial lines of enquiry. We believe that a process-sociological approach will help to develop a better understanding of the dynamics that have contributed to the growing incel phenomenon and could contribute to developing forms of secondary involvement that might reduce the dehumanisation and violence against women that has been associated with incels so far.

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Retro-Ideals: Knights, Gentlemen, and Cursed Soldiers. Unhegemonic Polish Masculinity in the (De)Civilising Process

Radosław Kossakowski and Tomasz Szlendak

1 INTRODUCTION: MASCULINITIES, FIGURATIONS, AND THE CIVILISING PROCESS

In recent years, masculinities studies—interdisciplinary studies of the meaning and role of masculinity in the contemporary world—have come to the fore within academic analyses of the social determinants of gender. In these studies, the dominant axis of masculinity analysis is its relational dimension, meaning they do not treat masculinity as a separate entity to be explored. They always treat masculinity in relation—every masculinity is ‘relational’, primarily concerning women, femininity, and other masculinities.

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The conceptualisation of masculinity in this relational dimension is central to the most popular analytical concept in masculinities studies—hegemonic masculinity by R. W. Connell (1987). The term ‘hegemonic’ here refers to a form of masculinity that dominates primarily over women and other subordinate types of masculinity. Implicit in Connell’s conception, therefore, is not only a strong emphasis on power—a key ‘component’ of being a man—but also, following this power, a set of qualities and properties that hegemonic masculinity must contain. Among these qualities, we find, above all: (1) heteronormativity; (2) striving for conquest over, and sex with, women; (3) tendency towards domination and control; (4) striving for power over other men; (5) being tough/brave/strong and undertaking risky activities (especially in the context of building a reputation in younger peer groups); (6) challenging others and competing with them; (7) seeking economic advantage; and (8) being able to provide for women and children.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity is followed—within masculinities studies—by other approaches emphasising relational aspects: inclusive masculinity (Anderson, 2009), caring masculinity (Elliott, 2016), or hybrid masculinity (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014). Although they also emphasise slightly different features than Connell’s concept (e.g., caring masculinity reveals a more sensitive face of masculinity, inclined to empathy and care and not attempting to dominate others), they do not differ regarding the relational nature of masculinity. Scholars using Norbert Elias’s concepts will quickly recognise its ‘operational’ similarity to relational studies of contemporary masculinities: social story of the transformation of masculinity can be told in terms of Elias’s theory of civilisational change. It is impossible to understand contemporary men and masculinities, as explored and characterised by masculinities studies, without shedding light on its relations to other subjects and the institutional environment that shapes them, just as it is impossible to understand the actions of an individual dancer in Elias’s metaphorical attempt to explain the meaning of figuration without reference to their fellow dancers and the rules governing dance. Figurations are social arrangements of interdependent individuals with different social powers (Elias, 1987). These arrangements are like a dance, taking place in specific spatial conditions—on the dance floor—and requiring two partners who know stepping rules. It makes no sense, therefore, to observe an individual dancer in isolation from the movements of the partner, without reference to the model choreography written down in textbooks for waltz or foxtrot, and without paying attention to the

conditions in which one dances. Similarly, it makes no sense to describe contemporary masculinity without considering women and femininity or non-heteronormative men (see, e.g., Lanzieri & Hildebrandt, 2011; Anzani et al., 2023), and without locating masculinities in the setting of an institutional environment that is changing in the civilising process.

An important contribution of Eliasian analytical perspective to the story of the transformation of patterns of masculinity is its focus on historical changes in the use or threat of violence. Elias described the civilising process as one of the most critical trends in the history of Western culture, involving eradicating direct violence from social life in modernising societies, accompanied by a simultaneous increase in their complexity and social integration (Elias, 1994). In the course of civilisation, more and more complex figurations emerge due to power struggles. In ever-newer figurations, the influence of physical power on social relations weakens. In doing so, the historical development of societies did not, in Elias's vision, involve only issues of civilising violence but also changes in power relations between men and women. Before the modern era, most societies had a similar division of roles between men and women. The former were engaged in hunting, war, or paid work outside the home, the latter in all kinds of care and household tasks. As a result, men became skilled in the organisation and honed their physical prowess and bravery, reinforcing their dominant position and skills related to using weapons (Brinkgreve, 2004). In warrior societies, before the emergence of modern states, the mainstay of men's power over women was not 'naked' male strength but a monopoly on the use of weapons. The 'Process of Civilization' involved the gradual elimination of violence and threats of weapons from gender relations through formal and informal normative regulations (Bucholc, 2011). As a result of the civilising process, social categories such as women, once more prone to being victims of violence, have gained moral, institutional, and state protection from more powerful categories (violence does not have a single dimension, so it is essential to be aware that, e.g., the decrease in acts of barbarism can exist with the emergence of new forms of emotional violence). Moreover, power flowing towards and into the hands of the socially weaker categories can be, according to Elias, described as progress.

Violence was—and in most cases remains—a male domain. Throughout history, men have been the initiators of violent acts, and the relational character of violence has been characterised by the fact that its victims have been either other men or women (the concept of hegemonic masculinity

has already been used for a multifaceted analysis of violence; see, e.g., Anwary, 2015). This is precisely how R.W. Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity describes gender relations (although it should be noted that Elias's theory did not inspire the work of R.W. Connell, who primarily drew on Antonio Gramsci and his idea of hegemony). What the two proposals for viewing gender relations have in common, moreover, is the fact that they recognise the historical change. Just as Elias recognised changes in the implementation of violence (e.g., in the domain of sport, see Elias & Dunning, 1986), its monopolisation by the state apparatus and the gradual sensitivity to its occurrence throughout history, Connell recognises transformations within gender relations (and as we point out, hegemonic masculinity relies on gender relations), such as the erosion of the oppressive and dominant character of masculinity. This is happening, among other things, where the values and norms promoted by women's movements are coming to the fore.

The disappearance of the meaning of 'naked' physical violence, which is the essence of the civilising process, significantly affects today's patterns of masculinity. The regulation of male power and the threat of using weapons in a confrontation with a woman—and, therefore, one of the mechanisms of the civilising process—leads to a transformation of men and masculinity. In a sense, the emergence of so-called new masculinities—inclusive or caring—can be read as the civilising process of masculinity. There is a shift from hegemonic, dominant, and therefore aggressive masculinity in relational terms to masculinity that avoids violence and expresses itself in emotionally normalised behaviour. Increasingly, men are supporting women in roles that have historically been assigned to women, so it can be assumed that—especially in the countries commonly referred to as the Global North—a shift in the 'division of function' is taking place and, thanks to emancipation processes, women are increasingly achieving the status of 'established'. However, it should be remembered that, as with the concept of hegemonic masculinity ('HM'), other concepts about masculinity were developed in a specific cultural context. The notion of HM emerged within, and thus primarily reflects, the values and norms of WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, Democratic) societies. However, in recent years, researchers have begun examining whether and to what extent men in other cultural contexts (e.g., non-WEIRD) embody hegemonic scripts (Messerschmidt & Messner, 2018). Furthermore, the meaning of other types of masculinity should be analysed through the prism of particular cultural values.

A specific cultural background is also relevant in the context of this chapter. This is because its main objective is to analyse the contemporary types of Polish masculinity in the context of Norbert Elias's reflections on the civilising process.¹ Our question is whether the types of masculinity presented here, a kind of idealisation to which Polish men refer, are the result of the "stagnation" of Polish masculinity in a specific historical epoch in which masculinity was strongly characterised by the capacity for the use of force and functioned in traditional gender relations saturated by violence.

1.1 *Non-hegemonic History of Polish Manhood*

A description of the emerging model of Polish masculinity requires an introduction to the complex history of Poland. Over the past few centuries, Poland has experienced severe political and social turbulence. In 1795, due to the Partitions of Poland by Russia, Prussia, and Austria, the state disappeared from the political map of Europe and regained independence only in 1918. The Second World War then prevented the development of state structures from the very beginning. The situation continued from 1945 to 1989 when Poland was under Soviet domination (a communist 'experiment' imposed after Second World War; Davies, 2005). This was a period of critical civilisational processes in Europe—the industrial revolution and the emergence of a modern identity. The pioneers of these changes were primarily men, who acted by qualities described by the concept of hegemonic masculinity: that is, dominant men exerted power over and demanded subordination from women and other lower-status men. However, Polish men did not participate in this process: they were subordinated to dominant male invaders and occupiers.

Poland, as a country on 'its own terms', has begun since 1989, although there are opinions that it follows the path of economic liberalism set by others. Similarly, due to unfavourable historical circumstances, Polish masculinity was forced to build its identity primarily based on resistance to other hegemonic patterns (e.g., the partitioners and occupiers). For the last two centuries, the public sphere, as the primary space for marking

¹It is worth adding that, according to feminist-oriented researchers, Elias's approach remains permeated by masculinism, see the discussion of the critique of Elias's work by Jennifer Hargreaves in: Delmotte, 2022. In this chapter, we do not address this ongoing debate.

male domination and hegemony, has been occupied by someone else, in the case of the Polish male. Referring to relational conceptions of hegemonic masculinity and Elias's sociology, it should be pointed out that Polish men could not occupy a hegemonic position and were in subordinated positions; they represented the so-called 'subordinated masculinity' (Connell, 1995).

After 1989, like society, the Polish male reproduces the patterns shaped by the Western free market economy in its neo-liberal form (Dunn, 2017; Leyk & Wawrzyniak, 2020). The conditions of the democratic market economy have, of course, brought increased prosperity and capitalist 'winners'—entrepreneurs who have managed to build significant wealth. However, men in this category do not function as a reference point in Polish society (and therefore do not represent hegemonic masculinity), not least because they do not make a name for themselves or enter politics, as is expected, for example, in the United States (of which President Donald Trump is the most prominent example, see Kelly, 2018; Messerschmidt, 2021). Men trying to make their way under capitalist conditions and the corporate rat race—absent from home (Sikorska, 2019)—have not passed on any models of masculinity to their sons (for more on the impact of the transition on the situation of married couples, women, and men, see Guja, 2016). Alongside the few stories of financial success and new fortunes, there are stories of economic migration, unemployment, homelessness caused by industrial restructuring, or stories of the failure of small and medium-sized companies that could not face international competition in Poland after 1989. Behind these stories are, first and foremost, men who were all socialised into a world of stable and secure work in a socialist state and for whom this world fell apart with the advent of the 1989 transformation. It is worth noting that a thorough and multidimensional analysis of the post-1989 "male" transformation in Poland is still pending. Although studies on, for example, the transformation of enterprises and the labour market have been the subject of research, the gender factor has rarely appeared. Moreover, the role of the decline of workplaces and the degradation of the professional role for the identity of men has not yet found a significant place in the scientific space.²

² Testimonies by men experiencing the effects of the transformation are cited, e.g., in: Leyk & Wawrzyniak, 2020. Their work, however, addresses the broader implications of the transformation.

As a result, we propose that a model of masculinity drawing on the assumptions of HM did not develop in Poland. However, specific cultural scripts existed and applied to social elites—the patriotically oriented nobility, the urban bourgeoisie, and the intelligentsia, a social class originating from impoverished nobility (Zarycki, 2003). The categories in point are the nobility, which evolved from the knightly estate, and burghers, who return to impoverished nobility. They had almost completely disappeared from the Polish social structure by the end of the Second World War, were exterminated by the Soviets and Nazis, or were forced to leave the country by communist authorities. In addition to these models, there are also models of war heroes and heroes of the fight against communism: these are the kinds of ‘careers’ that allowed men to gain social esteem during the last 200 years of partitions and occupation: the struggle against foreign powers became one of the critical markers of male identity during this period.

Consequently, in trying to construct their masculinity, Polish men ‘appropriated’ and adopted models that were alien to them in terms of class and cultural terms, but were close to them in terms of nationality, so it can be assumed that their adoption was due to the salience of national identity. This stems from the fact that the structure of contemporary Polish society is primarily based on the descendants of the peasant class, who were slave-like serfs for hundreds of years of Polish history (Pobłocki, 2021; Sowa, 2011). Therefore, in constructing a model of masculinity, most contemporary Polish men refer to historically elite social categories and thus to something that neither they nor their ancestors ‘experienced first-hand’—to class scripts that were removed from the social structure during the Second World War and in post-war communist Poland. As a result, we argue that, in its present form, the Polish phantasm of masculinity is a combination of three idealised figures: the knight, the pre-war gentleman, and the ‘cursed soldier’. All these types have strong links to national identity.

1.2 *Towards Conservative Scripts*

What are the features of these figures?

1.2.1 *Knight*

Knights are part of Polish culture. They are protagonists of canonical works of Polish literature. In Poland, this term primarily refers not to the

representatives of the medieval class of mounted warriors in the Western-European style, but to the seventeenth-century noblemen introduced into social consciousness in the nineteenth century by the Nobel Prize laureate writer Henryk Sienkiewicz. Sienkiewicz's depiction of the seventeenth-century Polish gentry, which in historical fact was far from both the ideal and resources of medieval Western knighthood, was a deliberate legitimising manoeuvre on his part. It aimed to elevate the Polish nobility defending their homeland against invaders in the eyes of readers living in the nineteenth century in an occupied country under foreign rule (Koziołek, 2018). To this day, Sienkiewicz's books praising this particular chivalry are part of the canon of school readings, and every generation of young Poles is socialised into this socially constructed model. They are presented as brave, noble men, faithful to the knightly principles of honour and brotherhood, and defenders of the homeland and the weak (including women). Defending the country was one of their most important virtues. Consequently, a knight recognises violence as essential to his status. Even if he uses this violence in a civilised way—governed by rules—it is a crucial component of his masculinity. The knight strives for hegemony, to fulfil an idealised script of masculinity in which relationships with women and men of lower status are drawn beyond ambivalence. An emblematic example of a knight is Colonel Michał Wołodyjowski, one of the protagonists of Henryk Sienkiewicz's trilogy, a master swordsman known as the 'Little Knight' because of his small stature. His subordinates adored him. Battle-hardened, devoted to his country and king, brave to the point of exaggeration. He was, also, passionate, although he struggled for a long time to find a wife. When he finally found a suitable candidate, she passed away. The unhappy Wołodyjowski, wishing to withdraw from life, secluded himself in a monastery, only to come out after a while and bring his lifetime of service to a noble suicidal end: unwilling to surrender the fortress he was defending in Kamieniec Podolski to the enemy, he blows himself up along with it.

Noble allegiance to principles does not mean such a type promotes inclusive or caring masculinity. Furthermore, importantly, it is not hybrid masculinity either. Therefore, its choice as a model at the beginning of the third decade of the twenty-first century may be a surprise, especially in the context of the moral changes experienced by both sexes in Western culture. However, we believe the contemporary Polish man cannot yet reach for more progressive patterns. As we try to show through the article, he has not experienced a hegemonic position from which he could turn

towards more inclusive forms of masculine identity through reflecting or recognising moral and civilisational changes.

1.2.2 *Pre-war Gentleman*

Another role model worth considering in the context of the Polish man is the type of pre-war gentleman who became a Polish pop culture hero. In recent years, this figure has been promoted in popular crime fiction and historical novels (including books by, e.g., Marek Krajewski and Szczepan Twardoch and translated into many languages; see, e.g., Krajewski, 2012; Twardoch, 2016), in which he appears as a rough, romantic detective. Eberhard Mock, the commissioner of the pre-war Wrocław police and the hero of one of the crime series by writer Marek Krajewski, is an excellent example of this model. However—interestingly—he was an ethnic German! Intelligent, insightful, elegantly dressed, faithful to moral principles such as responsibility, loyalty, and trustworthiness, while at the same time not devoid of serious flaws, such as a tendency towards alcoholism and violence. He falls in love unhappily with women he perceives as prone to betrayal and unworthy of love. He can be both charming and brutal towards them. He cannot bear to witness harm done to prostitutes and often rescues them from distress while ruining successive relationships by mistreating his partners. He embodies the patriarchal archetype, attempting to appease the violence he commits during alcoholic episodes through courtesy and lavish gift-giving.

1.2.3 *Cursed Soldier*

Cursed Soldiers (Polish: *Żołnierze Wyklęci*) is the term for an armed formation operating in the first years after the Second World War, forgotten for decades and restored to Polish culture thanks to the politics of history of the right-wing government of Law and Justice political party (see Jaskulowski & Majewski, 2023). For many contemporary Polish men, Cursed Soldiers are role models representing brotherhood, courage, loyalty, honour, steadfastness, and love for the independent country. Again, as in the case of the figure of the knight, there is no room here for ambivalence, for an inclusive relationship. The roles between men and women are traditionally separated. In the case of this model, women and their relational significance to male identity practically do not appear. Of course, among the Cursed Soldiers, there were women (a small minority). However, one gets the impression that this pattern is somewhat of a male distillate: it consists of “pure” masculine, traditional traits. Most of them

are related to warfare, as the Cursed Soldiers had limited opportunities for family life due to the covert nature of their activities. It is, therefore, not surprising that this model appeals to the most masculinised groups in Poland: football fans and extreme right-wing circles (e.g., Nosal et al., 2021).

It is important to note that all three models presented above derive from the conservative, traditional approach to defining male roles in Poland, associated today with the political right (as shown also by research on Polish men living in rural areas who conform to traditionally defined gender patterns, see Gospodarczyk, 2019). Relationships between men and women running along the lines of any of the three scripts are an antidote to the complexity and vagueness of customs in the contemporary world. Recourse to such scripts is also a response to, among other things, women's emancipation and their increasing social status, a response to the fact that—in Eliasian terms—women are not only becoming 'established' but are beginning to 'push' at least some men into positions of 'outsiders' (on the distinction between 'established' and 'outsiders', see Elias & Scotson, 1994).³ Due to the peculiarities of the last 300 years of Polish history, practising masculinity was usually associated with war, performing a soldier role, and performing such tasks as defending the country, fighting for independence, and protecting and supporting women and children affected by war. This involved dealing with all kinds of adversity and required various practical skills. There is no progressive-liberal pattern among the historical models of masculinity currently used to construct Polish masculinity, likely because there has been no period in Poland's history favourable to the emancipation of men and their internalisation of non-traditional roles.

Also, since 1989, when the country experienced an economic boom and began practising democracy, the model of a liberal, progressive man has not taken hold. Although men's movements that engage in left-wing, pro-feminist values appear in Poland today, their extent is limited (Wojnicka, 2013). Even the protests of many thousands of women in 2020–2021 related to the restriction of abortion laws in Poland did not become a convenient space for such left-wing masculinity to stand out and inspire others. Even in this case, football fans were the most visible:

³In this context, one can mention the phenomenon of "incels", widely discussed in Western literature (Sparks et al., 2022), which is still awaiting in-depth scientific analysis in Poland.

defending churches, forming close ranks of militias conducting a street-based, ‘cursed’ battle against leftism, also understood as an ideological recipe for a more ‘soft’, empathetic man. Like the Cursed Soldiers, the football fans, under cover of darkness and in the smoke of flares, proved that the monopoly on active and partisan masculinity is held by those who march with God, Honour, and Fatherland on their lips (Kobierecki et al., 2022; Kossakowski et al., 2020).

The emergence and growth of capitalism in Poland after 1989 resulted in a process of individualisation. Over the past thirty years, Polish men have competed with each other for economic status and power, including political power. The models of male and paternal roles related to hard work and earning money have not been helpful. Many men lost their jobs in shipbuilding, mining, or crafts, and the businesses they started did not survive. Success did not come from hard work or following the path established by men of a previous generation. Instead, success results from good luck, being in the right place, and abandoning family roles in favour of activities outside the home. Consequently, men can only use old models rooted in Polish culture, and these are conservative.

For example, this is seen in survey results showing that the modern Polish young men generally tend toward conservative values and the modern Polish women—toward liberal ones (CBOS, 2021). Unlike young men, young women in Poland present political preferences with different characteristics—betting on leftist and progressive attitudes. This is a derivative of their economic and educational success, with more women (than men) graduating from college in Poland. Women are also more likely to take risks, such as moving to a bigger city. It seems that men are coping less well with cultural changes, and their conservative attitudes are a response, among other things, to the lack of (historically formed) other models of masculinity and the emancipation of women (Korolczuk et al., 2019). Poland is still far behind the European average regarding the gender equality index (see World Economic Forum, 2022), and the traditional division of gender roles is still holding strong. Moreover, the current political situation in Poland serves to promote conservative models of masculinity. As a result of the ruling party’s, the right-wing Law and Justice, policy that long predates its recent rise to power, such models have become dominant in political discourse, the media, school education, and pop culture (see Graff, 2009). This is evident, for example, in the television shows on Polish public television (managed de facto by conservative

politicians). Many of these reproduce traditional patterns of morality, altogether avoiding, for example, topics related to non-heteronormativity.

1.3 *Contemporary Research on Masculinity in Poland*

In our study of young Polish men, the aforementioned cultural scripts of the knight, gentleman, and soldier emerge from the narratives as dominant. We base our reflections on empirical data from a more extensive comparative international study of contemporary images of masculinity (conducted at the University of Gdansk in the years 2018–2022⁴). In this chapter, we focus on analysing Polish men's responses to two open-ended questions from a quantitative questionnaire, which were phrased as follows: (1) If a man in your society wanted to prove to others that he was a 'real man', what is a behaviour that he could do? (2) What behaviour(s) would be considered unmanly in your country? We included the responses of 362 Polish respondents (students at Polish universities) in the analysis.

The statements of men born in democratic Poland that indicate the qualities a man should possess appear as if they were cut from bygone eras.

Respondents mention the need to be heroic. The knight, the old-fashioned gentleman, and the Cursed Soldier can die for the fatherland to defend the weak, women, and children. The respondents in the survey mentioned the following examples of heroism, courage, and bravery: *saving someone from danger; saving someone's life, for example, saving a child on the street where the car is approaching, to protect the apartment from thieves; winning the fight, go to war; to prove your courage and loyalty; defending a woman from danger; show courage in life-threatening emergencies; do something crazy, stupid and brave.*

Also evident is a hegemonic position towards women and a conservatism in the perception of the division of gender roles, going hand in hand, however, with gentlemanly behaviour towards women, especially in public spaces (a well-bred Polish man will always let a woman go through the door first). In the open-ended questionnaire responses, the topic of care often appears: *Taking care of your family, taking care of your woman, taking responsibility for your family, and being responsible for yourself and others.* Taking care of family means offering multidimensional protection: *I*

⁴ *Ku harmonii rodzaju. Związek między zagrożeniem męskości i równości płci w perspektywie międzykulturowej*, funded by Poland's National Science Centre (2017/26/M/HS6/00360).

can provide for my family everything my family needs in life, and I can protect it from dangers; To protect and take care of your family, help it and improve its living conditions; bringing an excellent wage to home so the household can live comfortably. The respondents' statements demonstrate that Polish men consider 'taking care of' broadly: as being responsible for, caring for, and providing for the family by meeting all of its daily needs. It is important to note that 'caring for' is, to some extent, connected with a courteous attitude towards women. This is another meaningful way for men to achieve the 'real man' status. Being courteous means that a man should be *a gentleman, be verbal and trustworthy, show respect to women, let them pass at the door, give way, and help with suitcases on the train or plane.*

In addition to attributes of heroism and bravery, Polish respondents also noted cognitive and personality characteristics that make someone a 'real man'. These include things like confidence, dominance, and decisiveness as well as aggression as the ultimate tool for conflict resolution and problem-solving—'taking matters into your own hands', showing others that you are more robust and braver: *Being able to take care of yourself, taking responsibility for your actions, showing your independence; be specific in solving various matters; Self-confidence, taking responsibility; Being determined and pursue the goal; To make a mature decision; Tendency to fight, aggression, willingness to dominate and leadership; Getting your way; Firmness, making decision firmly, self-confidence.*

Polish respondents also clearly emphasise the division between masculine and feminine in dress, gestures, and ways of speaking (a knight walks in armour, not in a dress, a pre-war gentleman wears a coat and a hat, while a soldier sports a uniform and a gun), resulting in the stigmatisation of those behaviours that lie in the zone "between" masculine and feminine, on the gender border. Thus, a man in Poland needs to be careful about his voice and gestures: *making gestures considered typically feminine; talking in a 'female' voice*—these are characteristics that a real man should avoid. In addition, a retro man must beware of clothing that would raise doubts about his masculinity. Dresses are not masculine; in the Polish context, they are only a garment for women. However, respondents also indicated a specific cut of trousers: *strange, inappropriate clothing, dressing in women's clothes, wearing drainpipe trousers, wearing specific clothes (e.g., skinny trousers called 'drainpipes')*. Other elements that the young Polish man associates with femininity (and hence non-masculinity) include *nail and face painting (makeup), using cosmetics for makeup*, and—importantly—generally taking care of one's appearance. What tends to be viewed

as unmanly is *excellent care for appearance; going to the beautician; shaving legs/shaving body hair, hair styling, and skincare*.

A real man, therefore, according to young Polish men, is someone who does not show weakness, does not give up (for any reason), does not feel fear in the face of danger, death, or the enemy, is not cowardly, does not express feelings and does not cry (a knight or a soldier cannot cry for any reason, cannot admit to feeling pain, cannot ask for help). Moreover, while his masculinity endures and persists in his relationships with women—the male-female figurations function based on traditional patterns: the man should perceive the woman as a weaker being needing care and protection. In this relationship, the characteristics of both sexes are marked, fenced off and non-overlapping. A man who commits to retro-ideals must beware of copying his female partner's characteristics and behaviour in the relationship.

2 CONCLUSION

The retro-masculinity in Polish that we diagnosed, a kind of return to historical models of masculinity, idealised and crafted for the use of pop culture and conservative school education, can be understood as an attempt to reduce the complexity resulting from the civilising process (Bucholc, 2013). The disappearance of chivalrous compulsions or soldierly obligations associated with experiencing oppression from enemies or occupiers leads to nostalgia for them, as a gap has now taken their place—a lack of new role models and new behavioural norms unencumbered by old relationships. Civilisational change involving the elimination of threats of violence in relations between men and women comes with difficulty in Poland because in place of the possibility of using 'naked' violence as a foundation for male supremacy and as a building block for patterns of masculinity, no other pattern of behaviour in interactions with women appears and no other pattern of "practising" masculinity. For the time being, therefore, the civilising process causes a pattern-making gap into which men fall and, in an attempt to get out of it, they 'cling' and climb up old patterns and axionormative rules. The relentless progression of the civilising process leads to a situation in which men today have the impression of being left with no role models for being masculine—they have been left with nothing but developing complexity.

Perhaps the retro-forms to which men are returning give them—fragile as it may be—a sense of maintaining the residuals of gender autonomy?

Since a return to violence is impossible, violence is controlled by the state, and only the state has a monopoly on its use, what would men build this autonomy on today? The retro-forms are the only option because only these retro-forms of masculinity, as sharpened by pop culture and politicised school education, are known to Polish men. The trouble is that these retro-forms and the rules of behaviour associated with them (we carry burdens for women, rescue them from oppression, let them go first, etc.) are identified as signs of violence by at least some progressive women's groups. This may mean that for some actors (women), the gender figuration has not yet changed—the retro-forms in the contemporary, nostalgic version still conceal men's actual superiority and power. The passing into oblivion of the violent and combative pattern of masculinity is a progressive civilisational change but not yet a reconstruction of the figuration. This is why we are in a state of flux in gender relations.

The civilising and regulation of the violent construction of masculinity have also shaken women's attitudes towards men and erotic relationships with men in attempts to build a couple. Women welcome the civilising effects of the softening male violence, but they often do not know what to do with the product of this process in the form of men seeking new masculinity while failing to find it. Either they reject such men outright, do not see them, or look for men who try to combine the new patterns with the old type of hegemonic masculinity, which is extremely difficult for today's men, as it requires a significant quantity of self-developmental twine. The lack of a new model of masculinity to meet the growing demands and perceptions of women can be seen in pop culture and felt in the thickening social atmosphere in Poland. It can be found in the non-positive tension accompanying clashes between women and men today. For example, the disjointed contemporary masculinity makes it challenging to fulfil the classic scenario of romantic love. Women are disillusioned by the 'quality' of men and the inability to find any 'meaningful' one to pair with. As a result, it can be observed that even they, while seeking 'valuable' partners (valuable meaning suitable for building a relationship in line with the old gender regime, where men held economic advantage) perpetuate retrogressive patterns through the force of cultural momentum. Contemporary men are distinguished from past men by 'immaturity' and 'lack of commitment'. They are united by a propensity for violence and for exercising power in relationships that are unacceptable in post-emancipation times and still present in the repertoire of male behaviour. According to the women, men gained new defects, having not at all lost

the previous ones. They have remained dominant as they were and, in addition, have become irresponsible and lack the “enthusiasm to be in a relationship”.

This familiar feeling, also present in Poland, is called ‘heteropessimism’. Heteropessimism is the publicly displayed dissatisfaction with heterosexual relationships by those who are in them. Alternatively, more precisely, by heterosexual women for whom these relationships—or in other words, the constant struggle for their quality and maintenance—have become burdensome and complex. Asa Seresin (2019) has described heteropessimism as a publicly displayed disillusionment with heterosexuality. It is a kind of outpouring of grief or hopelessness (mainly on the Internet) related to the frustrating experiences of women in heterosexual relationships. Heteropessimism is a strand in feminist journalism that proclaims that it is impossible to fix relationships with men and heteronormative culture as a whole. This is because men are still lagging in the course of the civilising process. Despite changes generally moving in the desired, Eliasian direction, men have remained immature, selfish, uncommitted, and violent.

What will happen at the end of this process—women’s power? How will it manifest itself at the level of form towards men? Will women become overly courtly in their behaviour towards men to vent their growing frustration? Civilisation is a matter of form. The balance of power between the genders is a matter of form—rules, laws, and social rituals substitute for naked violence. In constructing these forms initially in the days long gone, the idea was to ventilate the tension in the female part of the population. Have we reached a point in the civilising process where we need to ventilate tension in men (and women do not—yet—recognise this) by inventing a special form? Or is this never going to happen because of immutable biological advantages?

One hypothesis is that it may turn out that women’s advantage over men will not manifest itself in forms aimed at alleviating male frustration, as women are not dependent on men regarding sexual desires. They may start avoiding men in their intimate lives. According to psychologist Lisa M. Diamond (2008), a fundamental characteristic of female sexuality is the fluidity of their sexual orientation, which denotes flexibility in sexual responsiveness (cf. Baumeister, 2000). As some scholars argue, the growing legal and cultural acceptance of non-heteronormative relationships in Western countries, along with the fluidity of women’s sexual orientation, determine that women, in their pursuit of romantic relationships, do not necessarily have to form them with men. Women generally experience

more significant variability in sexual behaviour throughout their lives. Furthermore, emotional bonds between individuals of the same sex are particularly significant for women. Homosexual men often perceive their sexual orientation as stable and innate, whereas women readily attribute a more leading role to relationships with specific individuals.

The fluidity of female sexual orientation does not in any case imply that all women are bisexual. The majority declares a heterosexual orientation. However, this does not mean that under particular circumstances and conditions, they would not be able to fall in love with a woman and form a partnership with her. The currently perceived shortage of “suitable” men in the sexual market by women can be considered one such exceptional circumstance. Unable to find the “right” partner, frustrated by unsuccessful attempts at building heterosexual relationships and engaging in heterosexual encounters, they may either remain single or form other non-heterosexual relationships, leaving a significant pool of men in the lurch. Inflexible male sexuality makes most men still “condemned” to women. They continue seeking connections with women, although women increasingly overlook a growing portion of them. This is undoubtedly one of the causes behind one of the most troubling manifestations of today’s transformations in intimacy—incels. Incels lack almost everything to be deemed “suitable” by women: education, economic resources, traits such as responsibility, as well as sexual capital in the form of an “appropriate” body and effectiveness in self-presentation on dating apps (Boyce Kay, 2021). This is not far from male resentment, reinforced by social media (Mishra, 2017).

Sexually inactive and rejected men take harsh revenge through online sessions of hatred towards women (and incidentally towards those men who still meet women’s growing expectations). Populist politicians in the United States and Poland amplify and arm incels, exploiting their resentment. Resistance to cultural and legal acceptance of non-heteronormative sex, perceived as a threat to men’s sexual interests, is manifested, among other things, through the promotion of retrogressive models of masculinity by the radical right-wing side of the Polish political scene.

Nostalgia for retro forms also raises reflections on possible decivilising processes. Are not such events, such as the rise to power of misogynist populists in Poland (and elsewhere in the world) or the war in Ukraine, heralding a return to retro-masculinity with violence as a regulator of gender relations? History, after all, knows of instances of backsliding in civilisational development (Elias, 1996). Retro-masculinity can be described

from progressive and emancipatory positions in terms of ‘decivilising spurts’ (Dunning & Mennell, 1998), and metaphors such as ‘toxic masculinity’ are in succour here. On the other hand, the development of—civilising—processes of emancipation of women and non-heteronormative minorities seems to make it impossible to perform such retro-masculinity in everyday life. Men in Poland will not soon begin to refer to new, non-historical and non-conservative role models, which may result in progressing moral transformations in deepening identity problems in the near future. We, therefore, assume that the gap between women and men may widen in Poland. In more significant numbers, the latter may become involved in extreme movements of a military or ultra-rightist nature or group together in online communities fighting to restore ‘traditional’ masculinity.

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Science Oriented Towards Life: Ilse Seglow and Her Doctoral Thesis on the Society of Actors

Adrian Jitschin and Marion Keller

1 INTRODUCTION

Ilse Seglow (1900–1984) was one of Norbert Elias’s longest-standing companions. Their friendship began during Norbert Elias’s time as an assistant to Karl Mannheim at the University of Frankfurt am Main. It lasted—sometimes more, sometimes less intensively—more than half a century until her death. Ilse, at that time still Ilse Goldner (née Seligmann; from 1934: married Ziegellaub; later: Seglow), was one of the students who applied for their doctorate from Mannheim. Elias supervised her. Unlike Margarethe (Sallis-)Freudenthal (Freudenthal, 1934) and Natalie Halperin (1935), who Elias had also supervised, Ilse Seglow could not complete her dissertation. She had to flee Frankfurt am Main in April/

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May 1933 as an active member of the *Rote Studentengruppe* (*Red Student Group*). Divisions of this anti-fascist student group existed at several German universities, and Seglow rightfully feared being arrested by the *Gestapo*, the secret police of Nazi Germany. Yet, contact between Seglow and Elias continued after the escape. Both met again in exile in Paris and lived in England from the end of the 1930s.¹

For Ilse Seglow, Norbert Elias became “her lifelong friend”, and for her son Peter (born 1934), he also became a friend and “academic guru” (Seglow, 2018, p. 43). For Peter Seglow, Norbert Elias was one of the honorary members of their family (Seglow, 2013, p. 5). Ilse Seglow and her son Peter are represented with articles in the commemorative publication for Elias published in 1977 on his 80th birthday (Seglow, I., 1977; Seglow, P., 1977). In this first volume ever being published in honour of Elias, Seglow’s text is found in third place. In addition to the contribution by Gisèle Freund (1977; “Norbert Elias as a teacher”), it is the contribution that best provides an insight into the beginning of Norbert Elias’s career as a scientific mentor, in the time of his first official position as a scientist at a university. Under the heading “Work at a research programme”, she reports how their friendship went back to the early 1930s in Frankfurt. Not only that, but she also describes how the Humanities Section of the University of Frankfurt was structured and that Elias, already in this phase, “worked on a theory of society which is less abstract (...) and, thus, to better handle the practical problems” of arising from “realities of living together” (Seglow, I., 1977, p. 17). Her own research, intended as a doctoral thesis, was largely part of Elias’s research. “In a way the first steps of my research, the working out of a research programme, was highly characteristic of the manner Elias set about a piece of research” (ibid., p. 18). When choosing the topic of her doctoral thesis, Elias recommended that she choose a topic from her field of experience (science guided by life) (about the students around Karl Mannheim and Norbert Elias see: Honegger, 1990, 1994; Kettler & Meja, 1993).

Seglow goes on to describe in her contribution how she turned to acting as a sociological research object: “I had an extensive and detailed knowledge of the world of actors in Germany, the empirical knowledge which Elias lacked. He, in turn, had all the knowledge necessary for making me see the structure underlying this heap of details, for organising the

¹ On the friendship between Ilse, Gisela (later Gisèle) Freund (1908–2000), Ilse’s sister Lore Seligmann and Norbert Elias see Keller (2017, pp. 16–25).

material and beginning enquiries—the knowledge, which I lacked. We sat together for hours talking it over” (Seglow, I., 1977, p. 18).

Finally, she summarises the results of this unpublished research. “Germany’s cultural life, and particularly the hierarchy of its theatres, had a different structure from that of countries like England and France. (...) It is difficult to understand this structure without reference to the state-formation process of Germany and the high value traditionally attached by the German middle classes to culture or, to be precise, to ‘Kultur’” (ibid., p. 19).

The statements made by Seglow remained uncommented by Elias and were not further explained by him after Seglow’s death a few years later. Nevertheless, this short section of five pages seemed to be the essential indication of a far-reaching research program that had begun in Elias’s Frankfurt phase (1930–1933) but could not be completed. Seglow’s statements are exciting because they show ground-breaking parallels to what Elias would later publish in the *Civilising Book*. But did the book about the French court grow out of considerations about German acting society? What part did Seglow have in finding the choice between culture and civilisation? In general, the question of the progress of Seglow’s research arises. And how can Seglow’s study of the acting society be considered an early form of feminist research? These questions have not yet been answered because Seglow’s dissertation was considered lost (see e.g. the comments in Honegger, 1990; Hänzi, 2013, p. 27). Through Marion Keller’s contact with Peter Seglow in the summer of 2018, fragments of this dissertation were only recently rediscovered. This article aims to provide new insights into a sociological science guided by life, as suggested by Norbert Elias, which is in the early phase of forming a “figurational family” (as indicated by Ernst, 2015). Remarkably, Elias was early on highly involved with female researchers, supervising a majority of female doctoral students, which was the majority of his students (see Jitschin, 2021, p. 363). Such a finding is especially remarkable since it contradicts the then academic gender ratio in which females were only marginal.

The article focuses on the rediscovered fragments of Ilse Seglow’s dissertation. The extensiveness of this surviving database allows us to delve into the depths of the Eliasian support and design of such an application-related research performance using a case study. Furthermore, it forms an occasion to look closer at Elias’s role as supervisor at the Institute for Sociology of the University of Frankfurt am Main from 1930 to 1933 and this specific exchange and scientific relation of supervisor Elias. Finally, the

results of this study also shed light on the presumed support situation for supporting female graduate students such as Freudenthal, Rubinstein, and Freund (see for their cases Jitschin, 2021, pp. 359f, 404f and 427f).

The article first provides an insight into the biography of Ilse Seglow, an actress who wanted to research acting societies scientifically. Next, the content and structure of the bundle of her dissertation (previously believed to be lost) are presented. With her planned dissertation, she anticipated current research on theatre and acting (like Pailer & Schößler, 2011; Schößler, 2013; Schößler & Haunschild, 2011). Then follows an assessment of the progress of her dissertation and possible reasons for it remaining incomplete. Finally, a closer look is directed at the sample of actors she selected for the empirical part.

The article is mainly based on unprinted sources from several archives: In addition to Seglow's dissertation, these are primarily ego documents² of a wide variety of types. These include, above all, the correspondence between Elias and Ilse Seglow in the German Literature Archive (Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach, DLA Marbach, Nachlass Norbert Elias), tape recordings of an interview with Ilse Seglow in the Federal Archive Koblenz (Bundesarchiv Koblenz, BArch K B 339_Ton_11_1-18-2) and personal documents of official provenance (file on her compensation proceedings in the Hessian Main State Archive Wiesbaden (Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Wiesbaden, HHStAW, 518, 59378); student file on her studies at Frankfurt University in the University Archive Frankfurt (Universitätsarchiv Frankfurt am Main, UAF, 604, 697)).

The article connects to the historical exploration of the careers of the first women researchers in German sociology, as Vogel (2006) have started. While Seglow's thesis was begun before the feminist discourses were finding their way into the academic discourse on a broad frontline, the question of proto-feminist research arises. Undoubtedly, the begun thesis by Seglow belongs to a series of sociological women's research in Germany starting at the *Wilhelminian Age* with researchers such as Marianne Weber and a series of fellow women's researchers in the interwar period (see e.g. Gerhard, 1998; Honegger, 1990, 1994; Wobbe, 1997; Honegger & Wobbe, (Eds.) 1998; Keller, 2018).

On a different level, the article ties in with the fundamental contributions to the connection between the biography and academic work of

² See for the relevancy of literary sources and personal documents for social science research Ernst (2022).

Norbert Elias, the formation of a “figurational family” (Ernst, 2015), which usually points to the influence of Elias on the doctoral theses (e.g. Korte, 2017; Jitschin, 2021; Van Krieken, 1998). However, by lacking so far such an extensive bundle of sources of one of the doctoral research projects, the statements could only refer to the printed works.

2 “SCIENCE GUIDED BY LIFE”: THE ACTRESS RESEARCHES THE SOCIETY OF ACTORS—INSIGHTS INTO ILSE SEGLOW’S BIOGRAPHY

Ilse Seglow was born in Hamburg in 1900 as the third of four children of Caesar Seligmann (1860–1950) and Ella Kaufmann (1867–1953). When she was two years old, the family moved to Frankfurt, where her father was given the position of one of the rabbis of the Israelite community. Seligmann is considered an essential representative of liberal German Jewry. Her mother was the daughter of the Hanover chairman of the Jewish community. She was active in community welfare work and the Jewish women’s movement. She was one of the founding members of Bertha Pappenheim’s Women’s Welfare Association and chaired the Women’s Association of the Frankfurt Lodge.

As a teenager, Seglow was active in the Jewish youth movement. She was one leader of the *Kameraden* (“comrades”) and was part of the socialist faction here. She was in contact with Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig (1979). Her first marriage was to Martin Goldner, a doctor whom she knew from the youth movement and his commitment as secretary of the Free Jewish Teaching House in Frankfurt. They married in 1923 but separated after a few years and divorced in 1930 (HHStAW, 518, 59378).

She had left school before graduating her A level and worked in the social sector for several years: in 1921, she completed an apprenticeship at the municipal kindergarten teacher seminar. She then worked as a library secretary for a short time, attended the Jewish home economics school in Frankfurt, and worked part-time as a kindergarten teacher. She then trained at the Women’s Seminar for Social Professional Work in Frankfurt am Main (predecessor to today’s Study programmes in social work), which she completed at the end of June 1924 with state recognition as a welfare worker with a B grade. She gained practical experience for this training by working for several months (1923) in childcare in the children’s group of

the local group of the Jewish Women's Association in Breslau, in *Frankfurter Mutterschutz*, the local group of the *Bund für Mutterschutz und Sozialreform* in Frankfurt am Main ("League for the Protection of Motherhood and Sexual Reform"—a predecessor facility of today's *Pro Familia*; 1924). After that, she worked in the Breslau Center for Youth Welfare (1925) and the municipal professional guardianship of the Breslau City Vocational Office (1926). Finally, in August 1926, she took over (for a year) the management of the day-care centre of the Sisters' Association of the Breslau Society "Eintracht" (BArchK, B-339__Ton_13-1_40).

After more than seven years in the social sector, Seglow trained as an actor in Düsseldorf and then worked as an actress for about two and a half years: first at the *Stadttheater (City theatre)* Hanau (9/1926–4/1927), then at the *Stadttheater Saarbrücken* (9/1927–8/1928), and finally at *Stadttheater Cottbus* (9/1928–4/1929). These were relatively small stages that probably didn't rank exceptionally high in the hierarchy of stages. In her research, only the *Stadttheater* in Hanau is listed as one of the stages she wants to examine. Her log documents the variety of plays and roles she played over the two and a half years. There were supporting and leading roles, claiming her subjects as Sentimental, youthful characters. Seglow was also a member of the actors' association since 1926. Actors' unionisation would also have been covered in her work. This information about her career as an actress comes from a booklet (title: *Mein Tagebuch*) also preserved in Peter Seglow's papers, in which Ilse Seglow records her theatre engagements, the plays in which she took part, and the roles she took on. When she decided to study, she was almost 30 years old. In 1929, she took the *Hochbegabtenprüfung* (entrance examination for the highly gifted) at the university in Berlin, which enabled her to study without a school-leaving certificate. In the winter semester of 1930–31, Seglow enrolled at Berlin University. (She lived in Berlin because her first husband, Goldner, had accepted a position at the Charité there.) Then, after one semester, she transferred to the University of Frankfurt am Main. When she registered in Frankfurt, she initially stated that she wanted to be a lecturer at a Women's Seminar for Social Professional Work and then, after a few semesters, to become a psychoanalyst (UAF, Abt. 604, Nr. 697 Goldner, Ilse).

She was introduced to the circle around Mannheim and Elias by her sister Eleonore, called Lore, Seligmann (later Evelyn Anderson; 1909–1977), who was nine years her junior. Lore belonged to the group that followed Karl Mannheim from Heidelberg to Frankfurt after his

appointment in Frankfurt. In addition to Seglow and her sister, a close circle of friends developed during this time. As the correspondence preserved in Norbert Elias's papers shows, it lasted until her death, including Gisèle Freund (then still Gisela), who later became known as a photographer, and Friedrich (called Fritz, later named Fred and called Deetsch) Ziegellaub (1907–1973) (DLA, Nachlass Norbert Elias I, 36, 46, 47, 52 and 54).

On Elias's advice, Ilse Seglow decided on a dissertation topic to which she had a particular connection. She began researching the acting society she was a part of before university. She wanted to examine the actors' careers and their position in the figurative network of relationships between the director, critic, audience, and so on.

Acting was a habit in the Seligmann family, as Peter Seglow recalls: "It had been a tradition in my mother's family for someone; usually Erwin [brother of Seglow], to write a play in which all members of the family performed a role—except the person whose birthday was being celebrated" (Seglow, 2018, p. 122).

Ilse Seglow was in the theatre almost every day. The connection between politics and theatre was her passion, as she emphasised several times in interviews (f.i. BArchK Interview, B-339__Ton_13-1_5). Even when she no longer worked as an actress, she continued to move in theatrical and bohemian circles: she felt a part of the political-literary cabaret scene in Berlin, the environment of the *Katakombe*, a political-literary cabaret that was well known at the time, where also one of her friends (Therese Baerwald) performed. In addition, she participated in a workshop with Erwin Piscator (the well-known German theatre manager, director, and teacher at the time), where Joseph (Jupp) Ziegellaub (1905–1949), who later became her second husband, worked as a dramaturge. Jupp, who fathered her son Peter, was the brother of her close friend Deetsch and later turned over to become a director.

3 ILSE SEGLOW PAPERS: CONTENT AND STRUCTURE OF THE CONVOLUTE ON HER DOCTORAL THESIS

Marion Keller visited Peter Seglow, Ilse Seglow's son, in 2018. She received the documents he had kept in a folder for his mother's doctoral thesis. The authenticity of this folder can be considered secure. Not only do the handwritten notes match Seglow's handwriting, but the paper and

dates clearly show that these are the original notes from the early 1930s. Ultimately, the material confirms various descriptions of the short essay, such as a trip to Darmstadt for an interview with theatre director Hartung. So, these are the original notes Ilse Seglow made in the early 1930s, kept for all those years and ultimately passed on to her son.

The convolute comprises 60 pages in total. For convenience, these pages are numbered 1–60 below in the order they were in the folder. Some are typewritten copies; some are handwritten notes or supplementary notes attached to larger sheets of paper with paper clips. The text's elaboration also shows different processing stages:

- Some items can still be seen as a collection of ideas, similar to a brainstorming session in which terms were crossed out.
- Additions were made.
- Relationship arrows were inserted.

Others, such as the exposé at the end of the bundle, are written on the typewriter. All this points to the fact that these seem to be Seglow's complete notes for her doctoral thesis, although one can never be sure that other sheets do not exist.

The structure of the convolute is as follows:

Pages 1 to 16 contain continuous typewritten text with handwritten additions and deletions. They are headed: "*EINLEITUNG—Aufgabe der Arbeit*" ("INTRODUCTION—the task of the work"). However, in addition to introductory words about the research project, the text contains a structure and, finally a series of doubtful questions regarding points that have not been considered. Particularly noteworthy is a list of names which, on closer inspection, turns out to be an enumeration of actresses and actors who were popular then. These should represent a central research object of research.

Pages 17 to 26 contain a typewritten log of an excursion to Darmstadt on January 7, 1933, carried out together with Elias and Mannheim. It is about a conversation with the artistic director Gustav Hartung and his dramaturg Kurt Hirschfeld.

On Pages 27 to 34, there is a handwritten text, the context of which only became apparent after a long study of the notes. As we were able to find out, it is then an excerpt from the book "*Elisabeth Bergner*" by Arthur Eloesser (1926). Why this bibliography was found in the records became clear from the broader context. Eloesser was an influential literary

theorist whose 1300-page history of German literature was a milestone. In the comparatively small volume of 89 pages written about the trendy actress—which reached a very high circulation of at least 19,000 copies—Eloesser erected a monument to his existence as a fan. In addition to expressing admiration for the actress, the book shows large-format photos of her roles and her art. Eloesser reflects in this book on the incredible career (rise) of Elisabeth Bergner to a stage actress celebrated by audiences and critics, who was one of the most famous film stars of her time. He goes into the role of the acting agents that Bergner’s rise was favoured because a director discovered their talent for specific roles (i.e. the mutual dependencies that Seglow planned as a chapter in her work). In her excerpt, Seglow noted Eloesser’s remarks on actors (2 pages) and his remarks on Elisabeth Bergner (5 pages) primarily as direct quotations. Surprisingly she did not include in her excerpt the passages in which Eloesser writes about the role of Eros (erotic attraction) in the recognition and success of actresses. It would probably be challenging to prove this in a scientific paper, but the selective selection leaves the impression that she deliberately omitted the aspects of intersex attraction.

Pages 35 to 40 contain two typewritten outlines of Seglow’s proposed doctoral thesis. For the first time, one learns the intended title of the doctoral dissertation to be written by her, which she gives here as “*Zur Soziologie des modernen, deutschen Schauspielertums*” (“On the sociology of modern German acting”). The first section is written in fair copies, and the second contains handwritten additions. Reference is made there to Simmel, who wrote a text about “On the Philosophy of the Actor” (Simmel, 1923). In contrast to the later version of her exposé, this outline focuses on actors, their social background, career, and which idea type of actor (see also p. 51-52) they embody.

Pages 41 and 42 of the collection of materials are intriguing in many regards. They contain a process of finding by Seglow concerning preparing her doctoral thesis. It is only on the second page of the handwritten note, which is written closely and confusingly, that it becomes apparent what she is aiming for: It is about preparing a questionnaire for several theatres. At the end of the confusing list of stages, theatres, locations, and roles, she concludes that she would need at least 294 questionnaires to collect the data on the acting society she needed for her research. However, she does not give any reasons for her selection of the sample, which from today’s perspective can no longer be understood without knowledge of the theatre and acting landscape of the time. As with the Eloesser

bibliography, it is noticeable that Seglow had already planned it while not yet conducting research. An elaborate questionnaire does not supplement the planned questionnaire campaign in the entire bundle; there are only questions that have been considered at various points. This part of the research project was obviously at an early stage, at which feasibility planning was still at stake. It is conceivable that Darmstadt served as a pre-test. This means that Seglow checked some queries orally in the presence of her two supervisors, Mannheim and Elias, which she then wanted to include in the questionnaires to be sent by post. This is also supported by the statement noted in the Darmstadt protocol: “It is not our task to talk about the promotion in general, but we want to specifically differentiate the promotion of the actors, namely the promotion or relegation of actors of the Darmstadt (here she would then have another place name inserted) theatres” (p. 17).

Pages 43 to 47 have no recognisable connection with this doctoral thesis project. As it turns out, these are typewritten notes on various works by Max Scheler. Scheler was one of the best-known phenomenological philosophers of that time. He died in 1928, shortly after being appointed to a chair in Frankfurt. Until now, direct connections between Elias and Scheler have been unknown. Nonetheless, Karl Mannheim had committed himself to be a student of Scheler and, in 1926, even announced an extensive study which, among other things, was to have Scheler as its subject (cf. Kettler & Meja, 2000, p. 297). The extent to which Elias shared this fascination with Scheler remains unknown. So far, it has been clear that he studied with Edmund Husserl and came into contact with Martin Heidegger (Jitschin, 2021, pp. 154–159 and pp. 322–329). In the autobiographical part of Seglow’s chapter in *Human Figuration*, she writes (1977, p. 16):

I (...) had toyed with the idea of reading literature, but when I heard that Mannheim and Elias had come to the university of Frankfurt, my hometown, and had given the University Department (where Oppenheimer and Scheler had taught before them) a facelift; I decided to return there and study sociology with them and psychology with Wertheimer and others.

The notations in this autobiographical text are to be questioned from multiple points of view: The idea Elias’s reputation would have been heard of in Berlin seems rather implausible. Also, Scheler was not at the Institute for Sociology. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that Seglow saw him as a

relevant benchmark for the reputation of the University of Frankfurt. It remains unclear to what extent the references between the “facelift” and Scheler are to be understood: Did Seglow want to express that she saw Mannheim’s appointment as an improvement over Scheler? Or did she want to say that Frankfurt had already developed an exceptional reputation because of Scheler? According to the wording, both interpretations are possible. In any case, Seglow’s notes on Scheler are primarily about his philosophy of history and his criticism of modern capitalism. She doesn’t see him negatively in any way, but on the contrary, she describes what he wrote about these aspects in a very positivistic way. This theoretical framework may become the foundation of the doctoral thesis. However, unfortunately, she does not make a concrete introduction to the acting society in the notes that have been preserved. It, therefore, seems evident that she saw Scheler as a scientist who would increase the reputation of Frankfurt University.

Page 48 contains a typewritten questionnaire for the excursion to Darmstadt with eight questions. It is striking that these queries do not correspond to the line of interest described by Seglow in her contribution for the commemorative publication for Elias. In 1977 she claimed, “The first question was: What would you regard as an advance in your career? More specifically, would you consider as advance an engagement at a theatre in Munich, Berlin, etc. or a part in a movie?” (Seglow, I., 1977, p. 20)

However, the first question in the questionnaire is: “How do reputation and reputation come about?” The second question is: “Is there a ranking of cities that is lived in the consciousness of the actors’ society? How is this hierarchy determined?”

An inquiry above the demand for specific places like Munich and Berlin (which Seglow claims) is also missing. This finding raises the question of whether there is another (unknown) questionnaire. Or did Seglow concoct a question for her contribution in 1977 roughly in line with the original questionnaire? Again, it remains unclear whether Seglow does not refer to a (non-existing/non-written) questionnaire for the larger community of actors’ society.

Pages 49 to 60 contain a fair copy of a revised version of the introduction—the same document, which can be found at the beginning of the bundle (pages 1–16). In addition, previously handwritten additions are here included, and typing errors have been reduced so that the last twelve pages result in a much clearer version of an introduction of the research project. However, there follows nothing after them, underlining the impression of a project in its early stages.

4 ILSE SEGLOW'S STUDIES ON THE ACTING SOCIETY: ACTRESSES AND ACTORS AS RESEARCH OBJECTS

The bundle of papers shows that at least the structure for the planned dissertation had already been worked out. Comments by Seglow on interviews indicated the scope of the work was not small, and the short thematic summary also seems to show that the research work, which was intended as a dissertation, has progressed far. The surviving documents demonstrate that Seglow had prepared a combination of historical analysis and an empirical survey for her dissertation. Such could have been conducted on request by Karl Mannheim. Margarethe (Sallis-)Freudenthal (1894–1984), who Karl Mannheim was examining at the same time, reported afterwards:

When my topic had been fixed, and I was already deep in my work, Mannheim suggested that I analyse the present state of housekeeping while writing the historical part. I pointed out to him that such a thing was beyond my strength; I already had enough to do with this work. 'No', said Mannheim, 'it will be beneficial, especially for your theoretical part, if you know what the practical households look like around them, not only as a continuation but in terms of shapeshifting.' And he added: 'This second assignment will certainly lead to special results that go far beyond the purely sociological and will be of significant value for your scientific career.' (Sallis-Freudenthal, 1977, p. 110)

At the beginning of 1933, Ilse Seglow had almost completed the sample selection as can be concluded from the notes in her bundle of papers. In Seglow's files, there are ten names of German actresses and actors that she would like to examine more closely (p. 13). These were all famous actors at the time, standing at the peak of popularity. Both audiences and theatre critics in Germany and Austria celebrated them. Some of the today best-known of her samples are Paula Wessely, Elisabeth Bergner, Hans Albers, and Heinrich George. These actors appeared on the most imminent stages of the German-speaking area and were also assigned the leading roles. These actors' life dates and backgrounds show that Seglow was interested in five female and five male actors between 25 and 42 years old in 1932. Four of them had a Jewish family background. While objective criteria and formal rankings of that time are not known—it seems that the collection was not a matter of personal favouritism of research objects but a reflection of the perceived importance.

Even though Seglow's analysis from the early 1930s seems to correspond only slightly to today's requirements of feminist theatre research (e.g. Schößler & Haunschild, 2011), it is conspicuous that there is a balance between men and women in the sample; one can—to take it from the historical context—speak of the fact that Seglow at least in this case targeted gender equality. Yet, such a statement would be incomplete for a general image without further questioning Seglow's assumed sociological disposition regarding the evaluation of the sample. So, we can conclude our inquiry towards the ahistorical quest of early feminist research in such a way that we recognise an effort to collect data from both sexes. Furthermore, added assortment and analysis of the empirical data would have made it possible to work out and discuss how gender-specific factors played a role in the rise and fall of careers in the actors' society. However, from the material received and the incomplete status of the project, which was still involved with data assembly and the first versions of an outline, it cannot be elucidated whether such considerations were intended to become a result of the study. One can only speculate about the feminist orientation of Seglow's early research. One can assume that she wanted to discuss the evaluation of the collected data with Elias. Seglow was familiar with the feminist perspective through her mother and her work in the Jewish women's movement institutions. Yet, according to the preserved material, it appears not as if her thinking at the end of her Frankfurt period had been differentiated in a particularly gender-sensitive sociological research approach. Therefore, we suggest naming it prototypical or early Women's Studies work.

It is not apparent how Seglow intended to interpret the research findings. It can be assumed that no interviews with the prominent actors selected were planned because they were well-known stars who probably had little interest in supporting a doctoral thesis. Therefore, biographical literature (books or interviews in magazines) should probably be evaluated for the investigation, such as the excerpt of the Eloesser book about Elisabeth Bergner contained in the bundle. It must be a difficult hurdle to overcome at the time to obtain extensive background material on the various careers.

After reviewing the fragments of Seglow's dissertation, it can be assumed that it would have been difficult (almost impossible) to complete it in the United Kingdom in the form initially planned. At the end of February 1933, the first house searches and arrests of members of the Frankfurt *Rote Studentengruppe* took place. Seglow had to fear being

arrested for her political commitment and as a member of the Communist party. As far as there was a final version of the questionnaires, she could probably no longer send it to the (listed) theatres. From April to May 1933, she fled to Paris with her husband and his brother. There she was forced to set other priorities and no longer had time to continue working on her dissertation. Not only was it almost impossible for her to approach the theatres and actors from her exile, but the political upheaval had profoundly shaken the field she was investigating. The two people interviewed in Darmstadt, the director and dramaturge, had been pushed out of their positions. Many actors had lost their jobs due to political “unreliability” or Jewish origin. Lucie Mannheim, Elisabeth Bergner and Felix Bressart, whom she had considered, had to flee into exile. Other actors, such as Paula Wessely, tried to profit from the seizure of power. Further actors, such as Hans Albers or Heinrich George, experienced initial breaks in their careers until they came to terms with the regime. In any case, the political change had deep cuts for the actors in the public eye and changed the social field of the actor society as a study object.

Seglow turned her interest to other things. Her son Peter was born in September 1934 in Paris, where she had fled. Because of an illness, she had to return to Germany despite the danger. She lived undercover in Berlin until 1938, where her husband was able to work for the Jewish Cultural Association and somewhat financed their dire necessities. In 1938 they re-emigrated to England. After the end of the war, she trained as a psychotherapist at the London School of Economics in London, a training which she completed and which eventually led to lifelong work in this field (on Ilse Seglow’s life after 1933, see Keller, 2018; Nini, 1989). Although she continued to be interested in theatre, acting, and cinema, she had to give up further work on her academic analysis of the theatre society, as it had focused on a uniquely German phenomenon of culture and could hardly be transferred to the theatre society in Great Britain. The “order” (hierarchy, location of the stages in the artistic field) of the theatres selected for the dissertation was correct neither in exile nor did the social world re-establish itself after World War II in Germany. A continuation of the research could only have been carried out with significant regression. So, the question of continuing this work did practically not arise for a long time.

This is as well reflected in her correspondence with Elias. The letters they exchanged are all about other topics—during the long period from 1940 to 1984 being preserved. Only when they discussed the 1977 article

did the subject of the old doctoral research programme come up. Moreover, Elias accepted the manuscript of the article she sent without commenting on the status of the research she had carried out (DLA, Nachlass Norbert Elias I, 46 and 47).

5 CONCLUSION: ILSE SEGLOW, THE SOCIOLOGY OF THEATRE, AND THE RESEARCH PROGRAMME OF NORBERT ELIAS

Ilse Seglow is an impressive example from the first generation of scientists from Norbert Elias's "figurational family", whose scientific and academic career ended abruptly when the National Socialists came to power (on the second generation of scientists from the "figurational family": Ernst, 2015). The rediscovered fragments of Seglow's doctoral thesis show that her approach was promising and would have contributed to advancing sociological knowledge. Due to its sociological approach, the doctoral thesis would have been one of the first of its kind alongside the work of the German-Jewish playwright and theatre critic Julius Bab (1913, 1931) and thus paved the way for further research in this field. It might be illustrated how ground-breaking Ilse Seglow's unfinished doctoral thesis on the theatre societies could have developed by comparison with Bourdieu's concept of the reflective anthropology, published more than half a century later (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 127; Hänzi, 2013, p. 27). Seglow's work offers points of contact for his and contemporary research. However, a look at the dissertation she has started also shows the shift in her research interests.

While Seglow, as her notes indicate (pp. 55–56), emphasises above all the reciprocity of the dependencies—in the words of Norbert Elias, the balances of power—within the drama societies, today's studies focus primarily on the impact on the institutional framework, theatre work, the self-image of the actors and aesthetic production and thus the one-sided dependency of the theatre and its actors on the socio-political framework (see e.g. Schöffler, 2013; Schöffler & Haunschild, 2011).

Unlike the current theatre research, which falls in line with a feminist tradition, by focusing on "which gender is present on stage, which is represented and which institutional positions are occupied" (Pailer & Schöffler, 2011, p. 9), Seglow approaches the equal consideration of male and female actor roles early on in the sense of relational gender research. However, it can be denied that the study on the society of actors contains

a preliminary analysis in preparation for the civilising book or the text on the Court Society written by Elias. No significant connections between the Seglow outline and the Elias readers can be found. However, other Frankfurt female doctoral students had considerable input for writings by Elias: In this regard, Elias himself referred in interviews (Jitschin 2021, S. 280) to the preparatory work of Margarethe (Sallis-)Freudenthal (1934), whose study on *“Gestaltwandel der städtischen, bürgerlichen und proletarischen Hauswirtschaft unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Typenwandels von Frau und Familie, vornehmlich in Südwest-Deutschland zwischen 1760 und 1933”* as a starting point for his research on the French court from an architectural and spatial juncture. Her reflections on the housing structure were utilised for his presentation on the sociology of power. Thus, Elias had begun this book on the mechanisms of administration of the French king, quoting Freudenthal and finally working from her pictorial reflections on the rooms to an explanation of the political direction an entire country would have taken. This part of his theorising was very receptive to such a student’s idea. Natalie Halperin’s (1908–1974) work also influenced Elias’s work. There are astonishing parallels between her study of *“Die deutschen Schriftstellerinnen in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts”* and Elias’s “Sociogenesis of Aristocratic Romanticism” in connecting psychogenesis and sociogenesis (see Jitschin, 2021, p. 354). Here, too, it does not seem to be a mere adoption of ideas, but rather the written text has formed a fruitful synthesis of joint discussions in graduate school. However, in the case of Seglow, there is no such textual closeness. Thus, Elias repeatedly addresses the pastoral games of the aristocrats. According to his assessment, they were based on a “polemic against the higher classes” of the nobility. The figures of the shepherd and shepherdess would represent “a kind of counterpart and mirror image of the court”. However, such forms of sublimated criticism of another social class—and thus a psychologisation of a theatre play—is not to be found in the Seglow manuscripts. It is a surprising finding, given that Seglow, who had previously worked with Wilhelm Reich and later trained as a psychoanalyst, had not considered these dimensions in her manuscript. However, the fact that a piece of information is missing in writing does not exclude the possibility that it had been in verbal discussion.

Before her death, Seglow wished for her scientific work to be recognised. In 1983, one year before she died, Seglow tried to complete her doctoral procedures. She succeeded in getting the idea of founding the

Institute for Group Analysis in Heidelberg from the group-analytical self-experience groups led from 1973 to 1976 (see Keller, 2018). However, she was ousted from the Group Analytic Society, which she co-founded in 1952 in London and had managed for many years. After Elias and Freund became better known through their publications and exhibitions, and Seglow heard that someone had subsequently received a doctorate in Frankfurt, she hoped she could do the same (Lorch, 1989; Rubinstein, 2000). She began discussing it with Hans Bosse, a University of Frankfurt professor from the group analytical institute in Heidelberg. For the doctorate, however, she would have required, among other things, an expert opinion.

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“The Changing Balance of Power between the Sexes in the History of Civilization”. On Gender Relations in Unpublished Works of Norbert Elias

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The original text was written in German by the authors and then professionally translated. Quotes from Elias’s German unpublished manuscripts were also carefully translated in this process and are therefore not the original quotes.

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"The task of social scientists is to explore, and to make people understand, the patterns they form together, the nature and the changing configuration of all that binds them to each other. The investigators themselves form part of these patterns."

Norbert Elias (1987a, p. 12)

1 INVOLVEMENT AND DETACHMENT IN GENDER RELATIONS¹

Analyzing gender relations touches the heart of researchers' and readers' physical, psychological, and social involvement. After all, in addition to their professional personas, they are also partners, spouses, parents, or colleagues who are affected by everyday processes of negotiating power and sexuality. Scholars therefore often take refuge in an exceedingly detached research approach. As Devereux noted in his thoughts on "The irrational in sex research" (Devereux, 1967, p. 103 ff.), the first exhaustive research program on human sexuality was entrusted to a renowned wasp specialist (Kinsey): "perhaps because it was thought that an entomologist could be genuinely objective" (ibid., p. 104). For a long time, Pierre Bourdieu also retained a certain distance to the topic of gender relations, only writing about them sporadically, and did not publish a systematic work on them until late in his career, as Elias had also intended. In "Masculine Domination," Bourdieu stated: "And so, [...] after much hesitation and with much trepidation, I have ventured on to an extremely difficult terrain, currently occupied almost exclusively by women" (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 116). Bourdieu's attitude in approaching the topic is not one of pure detachment, however, but of upholding a "relationship of sympathetic externality" (ibid., p. 116) vis-à-vis gender issues, in particular to the emancipation efforts of women, who are the less powerful actors in the gender figuration. For Bourdieu, as for Elias, this

¹ Because modern usage clearly distinguishes between social gender and biological sex, we refer to "genders" in this article where Elias was referencing social regulation of people's behavior along gender lines and only use "sexes" when discussing biological matters such as sex organs or when citing passages from Elias's work, as we do in the title of our publication, but not in the subtitle.

approach contains, in Elias's terms, aspects of the habitus of a *balance of involvement and detachment* that Elias found to be both essential and supported by his sociology of knowledge. This played a key role especially for Elias's treatment of long-term gender dynamics (see Ernst, 2019, p. 400). Bourdieu convincingly showed one primary challenge for those analyzing gender differences, especially when the authors are male. That is, how to deal with the danger that arises because the researcher "is liable to use as instruments of knowledge schemes of perception and thought which he ought to treat as objects of knowledge" when "dealing with an institution that has been ascribed for millennia in the objectivity of social structures and in the subjectivity of cognitive structures, and therefore having at his disposal in order to conceptualize the opposition between male and female only a mind structured according to that opposition" (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 115).

Elias is just as cautious as Bourdieu when it comes to presumed "masculine" and "feminine" aspects and their structuring effects on our minds. This becomes visible when he distances himself from ideas and terms that were drawn from modern structures, such as the concept of the family that assumes the contemporary nuclear family of Western societies to be the standard model for the cohabitation of women, men, and children. In general, he criticizes the naturalization of social relationships, including gender relations. One of Elias's interesting and innovative neologisms is that of the *andrarchy*, that is, male dominance, which he places alongside the established term of patriarchy (see Klein & Liebsch, 2001, p. 241). Elias's and Bourdieu's radical sociological approaches do not, however, fall prey to the misconception that the categories "male" and "female" are less necessary or not analytically useful simply because they are not just biological characteristics but in essence social facts that interpret and regulate biological facts and as such are subject to cultural change. Both scholars worked with these categories in a dynamic sense.

Reducing the power contrasts between the established men and the less powerful women increases gender variations and behavioral possibilities. This amounts to a de-polarization of gender characteristics but not to their disappearance (see Klein & Liebsch, 1997a, p. 12). As Virginia Woolf wrote: "It is fatal, to be a man or woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly" (Woolf, 1989, p. 104). Just as Elias, she

pinpointed power as the crux of gender relations: “all this claiming of superiority and imputing of inferiority” (ibid., p. 106).² She and others have stated that a particular form of creativity arises when mixing aspects which correspond to and are connotated as feminine and masculine experiences and the abilities developed from these experiences in our culture. This is because the mind is then not structured strictly along female-male lines (see Woolf, 1989, p. 98; Criado-Perez, 2020, p. 409 ff.; Bourdieu, 2001, p. 115). One of Elias’s closest associates observed precisely this when reflecting on how Elias dealt with involvement and detachment (see Schröter, 1997, p. 224). This can be shown with two specific points of comparison:

While he was in exile in London, Elias also worked on creating the group analytic approach in close cooperation with the psychoanalyst Foulkes, whom he knew from when they were both in Frankfurt. In detailed records from the development of this psychoanalytical method that was transported into a group situation, one can see how strongly Elias emphasized the aspect of detachment or distance in the years following the Second World War in his attempt to achieve knowledge production *in vivo*. This period was also when he first published on *Problems of Involvement and Detachment* (see Waldhoff, 2007a, 2007b). In a new *Introduction* that he wrote at a later time, however, the model of involvement and detachment shifts and deepens as Elias illustrates quite vividly with the example of the development of painting. When contrasting Rembrandt and Velasquez, for example, he writes:

Greatness in the kind of art represented by the form of painting which gained dominance in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, highly individualized greatness, was hard, perhaps impossible, to attain without a very high capacity for distancing oneself from one’s objects as well as from oneself, and then again, secondarily, for involving oneself personally with all one’s strength on one’s painting or whatever artistic activity one chose to undertake. (Elias, 1987a, p. LVI)

This new “blend of detachment and secondary involvement” (ibid.) also clearly applies to the problems of scientific object relations. At the same

²Wouters (1998) examined the basic meaning of feelings of superiority and inferiority from the perspective of civilization theory.

time, with Rembrandt one can observe a new mix of gender characteristics (see Murgia, 2022, p. 83).

In the end, one can say that Elias increasingly moved from emphasized detachment to an involvement-detachment balance. We believe this provided a fertile foundation for academic perceptions as a whole and in particular for the treatment of gender relations, as this way of seeing can affect what is seen: “From the perspective of civilization theory, the two-gendered order is neither universally valid nor immutable” (Klein & Liebsch, 1997a, p. 34). Especially when viewed from a long-term perspective, as Elias does, this fact and the structure of gender relations in general can be seen more clearly: “Undoubtedly to go back from the present times to consider the changing balance of power between the sexes in a social context which to some extent is very different from its present social context requires a certain capacity for detachment” (DLA Elias, 1985c, p. 40).

In the following, first a brief overview of Elias’s published and especially unpublished texts on gender relations will be given (Sect. 2). Following this, we will discuss Elias’s concept of interdependence (Sect. 3) and the legitimating instances for regulating gender relations (Sect. 4). Section 5 looks at the core of Elias’s analysis of the transformation of gender relations, that is, the changes to the balance of power. In the final part (Sect. 6), the results will be summarized and discussed.

2 ELIAS AND GENDER RELATIONS: TAKING STOCK

In his published works, Elias has been said to pay “relatively little attention [... to] gender relations” (Hammer, 1997, p. 66). It is therefore not surprising that German gender sociology based on Elias only “existed on the margins” (Treibel, 2012, p. 83) of research into the 1990s. Only a single article by Elias discusses gender relations directly and more or less as its sole topic with an analysis of the Roman empire—or more precisely, it deals with the “The Changing Balance of Power between the Sexes” (Elias, 1987b). In his other works, however, Elias does consistently refer to the topic, although it is never the focus (e.g., Elias, 1998, p. 40ff., 2012b, p. 166ff, 2022, p. 31ff.). In his postdoctoral thesis written in the early 1930s on court society, Elias uses the housing structure, which was separated by sex, to analyze the power relations between the genders. In

this case, power was well-balanced in a way that was unusual when placed in a historical perspective (see Elias, 2006a, p. 45ff.).

In the first volume of his major work “The Civilizing Process,” there is a chapter entitled “Changes in attitudes towards the relations between men and women” (Elias, 2012b, pp. 166–185), in which he focuses primarily on the “‘intimization’ of all bodily functions” (ibid., p. 184) using the example of sexuality. However, he also mentions the “balance of social power between the sexes” (ibid., p. 178). In addition, Elias addressed the subject of gender relations in two forewords to other books (see Elias, 1987c, 1990).

The estimation that Elias marginalized the topic can be completely dismissed by looking at the unpublished works available in the Deutsches Literaturarchiv (German Literature Archive) in Marbach am Neckar: During his lifetime, but especially as he grew older, he dealt intensively with gender relations even though he never published any extensive works on the topic. The topic has therefore remained somewhat hidden. A manuscript in an advanced stage with the title “The Changing Balance of Power Between the Sexes,” which Elias apparently wrote at the same time as “The Society of Individuals” (1939) (Elias, 1991), seems to have been mistakenly thrown in the trash by the janitor at his office in Leicester and thus the world was deprived of it (see Elias, 1984, p. 312).

An anthology (Klein & Liebsch, 1997b) as well as a monograph (Ernst, 1996) and various articles (e.g., Ruhne, 2017; Ernst, 2019) have already taken up the topic of gender relations from the perspective of German-language process sociology. In one of their publications, Klein and Liebsch (2001) also focused on Elias’s unpublished works, finding “equalization” and “individualization” as the driving social processes of changes in gender balance (see Klein & Liebsch, 2001). The present article picks up at that point and analyzes additional unpublished works or works that have since been published (Elias, 2022) to provide an additional, complementary contribution to understanding how the changes in the balance of power between the sexes can be described and explained.

For this purpose, the following manuscripts will be included with the permission of the German Literature Archive and the Norbert Elias Foundation in Amsterdam:

<i>Title</i>	<i>Scope</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Type of manuscript</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Citation</i>
Wandlungen des Geschlechtergleichgewichts [Changes to the Balance of Power between the Sexes]	76 pages	No year, but based on cited literature after 1971	Book / article	A: Elias 633	DLA Elias (n.d.)
Note to Sexes	47 pages	1984/1985	Book / article	A: Elias 630	DLA Elias (1984/1985)
Natürliche und soziale Aspekte der Geschlechterbeziehung [Natural and Social Aspects of Relations between the Sexes]	54 pages	1985	Book / article	A: Elias 636	DLA Elias (1985a)
Wandlungen in der Machtbalance im Verhältnis von Männern und Frauen [Changes in the Balance of Power in the Relations between Men and Women]	10 pages	1985	Book / article	A: Elias 631	DLA Elias (1985b)
Changing Balance of Power Between the Sexes	44 pages	1985	Presumably a text for a speech	A: Elias 627	DLA Elias (1985c)
Sex and Civilisation	11 pages	1989	Book / article	A: Elias 838	DLA Elias (1989)

There is no guarantee that this list is complete. There are many individual pages and sections in the various manuscripts listed above, and there are surely also other unpublished manuscripts with sections in which Elias mentions gender relations. The following section discusses Elias’s key theoretical assumptions.

3 “THE NATURAL ORIENTATION OF EACH PERSON TO OTHERS” (CONCEPT OF INTERDEPENDENCE)

According to Elias, humans’ sexual drive is natural, but its social expression is not. As far back as we have records, this drive has been subject to social regulation at all times and in all societies (see DLA Elias, 1985a, p. 1). Individuals’ sexual drive or the “special organs for what we call the sex drive are naturally designed to be attuned to those of the other sex”

(DLA Elias, 1985a, p. 4), and this fact alone contradicts the widespread assumption of *homo clausus*, that is, the human who is “self-contained.” Elias counters this common idea of humans as *homo clausus* with both the concept of figuration and the approach of affective valences, which are primarily directed at other people (see Elias, 2006b, p. 303ff., 2012a, p. 129ff.). People’s biological make-up significantly contributes to their dependency on one another, but this is by no means limited to the mutual satisfaction of sexual needs, although these do belong to the core of “the valence figuration that is characteristic of each individual” (Elias, 2006b, p. 308). Elias believes that what is characteristic for human beings’ emotional ties is especially “The possibility of emotional durability above and beyond the sexual act is characteristic of human emotional bonds. So is the possibility of there being very strong emotional bonds of many kinds without sexual overtones” (Elias, 2012a, p. 131). Still, sexuality can be seen as the “strongest, most demonstrative manifestation” (ibid., p. 131f.) of the human need for emotional resonance and for companionship and clearly shows the fundamental orientation of humans on one another. The fact that men’s and women’s sexual organs are adapted to one another points to humans’ bio-social fit. This does not mean, however, that the specific structure of gender relations is biologically predetermined or even genetically anchored (see DLA Elias, 1985a, p. 4).

“In all known human societies to date,” one can find “social patterns of control for sex drives and emotions that, like the language of a society and like their speech patterns, are not specific to a species but to a society, and these must be acquired by each individual member of the group through specific forms of learning using the unlearned, species-specific potential for self-control that all humans have. They are typically embedded so deeply and solidly in each group member’s malleable, unlearned system of self-control that they often appear themselves to be unlearned, natural idiosyncrasies” (DLA Elias, 1985a, p. 11).

In another passage, Elias writes of the extraordinary mutability of both gender relations and parent–child relations as something unique to humans, specifying this by stating:

This mutability applies first to the substrate, that is, to sexual desire itself. This is capable of far greater changes in humans, far greater nuances and differentiations, than is the case with other living beings. Secondly, it refers to the social regulation of sexual desire. No group of humans has been discovered that has not subjected people’s sexual desire to social regulation.

The type and pattern as well as the strictness, stability, and strength of this regulation has been quite different in various societies, however. In addition, the social regulation of gender relations can go through transformations across generations in one and the same society. (DLA Elias, [n.d.](#), p. 7f.)

It was particularly important to Elias that this mutability be emphasized, as he believed it to be important both for individual orientation as well as for empowering people to question the norms of gender relations with which they grew up and that have become second nature to them. These relations are to be seen for what they are: a social regulation of individual drives. "These regulations change haphazardly and blindly over the course of the centuries. They arise from power struggles among many interconnected groups of people within changing social structures and not least also from power struggles between men and women or between parents and children themselves. By and large, they correspond to the change in the distribution of power in these societies" (DLA Elias, [n.d.](#), p. 9). When looking at contemporary Western societies and their processes of individualization, the initial wording Elias uses is rather surprising:

Every couple, girlfriend and boyfriend no less than husband and wife, has to work out its own salvation. It has to work out its modus vivendi, a balance of power, ways of living together. (...) The social model of sex relations determines what in a particular society is regarded as norm, as tolerable deviation and as intolerable deviation. (DLA Elias, [1989](#), p. 1)

4 LEGITIMACY IN THE REGULATION OF SEXUAL DESIRE

Elias starts by asking why sexual relations need to be regulated in the first place, combining this with a knowledge-sociological reflection on the level of synthesis in socio-scientific research questions. This reflection is just as important a foundation as the knowledge-sociological question of involvement and detachment, to which it is closely connected:

The understanding and the knowledge of the development which the social regulation of sexual relationships underwent through the millennia are rather incomplete. In particular the explanation of changes, of new regulations such as the incest taboo or the doctrine of the indissolubility of marriage are still rudimentary. That is to some extension due to the fact that the problem with which one is concerned is far from clear. It is usually approached at a fairly low level of synthesis. The questions one tries to

answer are usually questions concerning the origin of or the reason for this or for that particular regulation of peoples' sexual relationship (...) One does not usually go so far as to ask why sexual relationships have to be regulated at all. (DLA Elias, 1984/1985, p. 37)

Besides human survival units' interest in producing children, he poses additional and fundamental anthropological questions such as: "Do only those groups of people survive who have been successful in steering the amorphous and socially treacherous human sex drive onto the more solid path of socially dictated patterns of relations [...]" (DLA Elias, 1985a, p. 2)?

In the discussion of this treacherous drive however, no difference is made between the sexes that would point to the fact that this area was and continues to be far more treacherous for women. This is reminiscent of Erdheim's discussion of the observation that Elias may have mentioned the "Great Cat Massacre" in Paris, but not the witch hunts arising from the modern absolutist state that took place in the same context (see Erdheim, 1996, p. 164f.). Elias only discussed the emancipatory surge of women in the upper class, the court society. More close consideration would also need to be given to the links between sex- and class-specific ambivalences in the processes of absolutist nation-building, something that was not done in his unpublished manuscripts on sex relations, either (see Brinkgreve and van Daalen in this volume).

This then leads to the question of the social instances that have both an interest in regulation as well as the power to regulate and monitor human sexual desire and sexual behavior in the respective social unit. Because the social legitimation, monitoring, and structure of gender relations change, this transformation is almost always characterized by the power struggles among these social instances or groups (see DLA Elias, 1985a, p. 23).

The specific legitimation and regulation of gender relations that correspond to the conventional power relations typically [seem] to simply be an expression of good custom, or perhaps a divine command; they often present themselves as representatives of an eternal morality that originated outside of the human world. In this form they are then automatically recognized and found to be necessary by the groups that are weaker in power. (DLA Elias, 1985a, p. 23f.)

Elias differentiates among five legitimizing instances of gender relations that can be identified in the known phases of humankind's development (DLA Elias, 1984/1985, p. 36, 1985a, p. 27):

1. Extended or close family groups
2. Local groups such as village or neighborhood communities
3. Groups of priests
4. Representatives of the state
5. Groups of people of a similar age

In smaller survival units, the regulation of gender relations was typically the responsibility of the groups of relatives involved. Using hodiecentric terms like marriage and family for gender relations that were legitimized this way leads us astray, as they suggest a permanency and robustness that, upon closer inspection, only existed or exist in individual cases. When discussing the development of the idea of marriage and family as a permanent connection that exists in many cultures today, Elias explained it as follows:

In the relatively brief phase of European primacy in humankind's development, marriage and then also the family as a legitimized form of relations between the sexes took on a particularly set and permanent shape because two especially powerful and consolidated organizations, the church and the state, successfully fought for a monopoly in legitimizing marriage for sexual relationships. (DLA Elias, 1985a, p. 25f.)

Elias further details how the process of the "clericalization of matrimony" (DLA Elias, 1985a, p. 26 in German; DLA Elias, 1984/1985, p. 28 in English) slowly took place over the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Europe against the resistance of state representatives (e.g., Thomas Cromwell), ultimately leading to a shared right of legitimation (church and state). This type of control for legitimating and dissolving a sexual relationship loosened relatively quickly in the post-Second World War era in favor of the two people directly involved, so that church and/or state legitimation was no longer absolutely necessary to enter into a sexual relationship. People of a similar age do still typically exercise a certain informal amount of social control over such relationships. Elias reached the conclusion that "a high degree of self-regulation [...] has taken the place of regulation by others" (DLA Elias, 1985a, p. 27), and

this brings specific problems along with it. However, the concepts of marriage and family are still reserved for those forms of sexual relationships that have been legitimized by the church or state. They therefore do not refer to anthropological constants of humankind's development but instead to a "mutable form of social expression and regulation of natural conditions, primarily humans' sexual desire" (DLA Elias, 1985a, p. 28).

5 SOCIOGENESIS AND PSYCHOGENESIS: POWER BALANCES IN RELATIONS BETWEEN GENDERS

For Elias, power balances made up the core for describing and explaining shifts in gender balances. He associated these power balances with weights on two sides of a scale (see DLA Elias, n.d., p. 21). As in his published works (e.g., Elias, 2012a, p. 70), he described in the manuscripts we analyze here "power" as a structural characteristic of all human relations (see DLA Elias, n.d., p. 12). But the

aura of unease that surrounds the concept of power covers up and distorts the sociological problem with which we are dealing. Questions of power play a key role in every human relationship, whether this is the relationship between spouses, between governments and the governed—wherever we look in our social world, we run into the problem of power distribution. These problems are ubiquitous because of the nature of human interdependencies. Wherever humans have a purpose for one another in any sense, wherever they are dependent on one another in any way, the question arises as to which side is more dependent on the other. Power is a concept that shines a light on a structural characteristic of all human relationships. (DLA Elias, n.d., p. 12f.)

According to the model of socio- and psychogenesis, the power balance between the genders is rooted in the overall structure of the respective society. In an authoritarian state, for example, gender relations tend to be more authoritarian than in a democratic state. Elias supports this claim by discussing the rights of the male heads of households over their wives and children, as described in the Zedler Universal Lexikon from 1736 (see DLA Elias, n.d., p. 13ff.). It very clearly describes the legal authority of husbands and heads of the family over their wives and children. One can see that there was a relatively unequal distribution of power in marriage up to the mid-twentieth century, and that this primarily had a social character

and not a personal or individual one (see DLA Elias, [n.d.](#), p. 14). This imbalance was supported ideologically with the help of the contemporary religious, philosophical, and scientific perspectives and communicated openly. In contrast, when the power between two groups begins to equalize, quite frequently one can witness the topic being repressed in public until the conflicts become openly apparent and discourse starts. If there is still a strong power imbalance, conflicts rarely surface in a direct and open manner, because the sanctions against the outsider group, in this case "that await women if they resist men's authority are so serious and unpleasant that any thought of rebelliousness, the desire to be able to resist, is suppressed" (DLA Elias, [n.d.](#), p. 23). This corresponds to the social production of unconsciousness, as the ethno-psychoanalyst Erdheim showed, such that "the persons did not understand themselves, that is, they had not even become aware of their own desire for rebellion" (Erdheim, 1990, p. 433). Because these types of psychological processes do not occur without physical consequences, at the beginning of the twentieth century Freud found extensive evidence of symptoms for his psychoanalytic therapy. However, this analysis focused on individual characteristics of the affected person when explaining the symptoms and more or less ignored social conditions. For Elias, certain psychogenetic signs of illnesses that occurred especially in women in the nineteenth century, such as hysteria or frequent fainting, were actually symptoms of their subordinate position, which they could temporarily escape only with these neuroses (DLA Elias, [n.d.](#), p. 23f.).

Elias identified three major periods of social advancement, which he called development spurts,³ in European history in which the balance of power between genders became more equal:

The development of the social balance of power in Roman [...] antiquity was one of them. The development of the social balance of power in wealthy court societies during the Middle Ages and early modern times was the second spurt of this kind. The development of the social balance of power in European societies of the 20th century represents the third spurt in that direction. The last of these three spurts was more comprehensive and went further towards equalization of the social position of women and men than

³These egalitarian shifts "enabled women to develop into what we now call individuals" (DLA Elias, 1985c, p. 34). Elias thus links individualization to increasing power opportunities.

the two preceding spurts towards greater equality. One may doubt whether this last move towards greater equality between the two sexes would have been possible without the preceding moves in that direction. (DLA Elias, 1989, p. 10f.)⁴

The extensive and most recent advancement, which can be observed up to the present, more or less includes all social classes, at least in western societies, according to Elias, and possibly in all more developed industrialized societies. This cannot be said of the previous shifts, which each only took place in one particular class. The equalization of the balance of power between two groups also includes the informalization of the behaviors of the people living in this figuration; in contrast, behaviors are typically more formalized when power is highly imbalanced (on this, also see Wouters, 1999).

In his book “Sozialer Kanon, soziale Existenz und das Problem der Sinngebung” (Social canon, social existence, and the problem of meaning), posthumously published in 2022, Elias gives an example of this development using the sexual permissiveness of young middle-class women and men: Before 1914, the social canon prohibited young men and women from engaging in any sexual intercourse before marriage. While this prohibition was absolutely binding and inescapable for women, men’s sexual activity was tolerated as long as the women with whom they were engaging in sexual intercourse were from lower classes (see Elias, 2022, p. 31ff.). Between 1918 and 1933, students began to enter into partnerships more frequently and relatively openly despite this behavior meeting strong opposition from relatives and property owners from whom they rented their living quarters. After the Second World War, the rift between modern behavior and the old canon grew, public opinion increasingly tolerated cohabitation before marriage, property owners’ opposition disappeared, and a kind of vacuum arose—a space for experimenting. According to Elias, these kinds of changes in a particular area can only be understood and explained in connection with more comprehensive structural changes in the societies in which the changes can be seen. In this case, one explanation lies in the shifting balance of power between the generations. The instruments parents and relatives had for enforcing their

⁴ Here Elias points out that the present article (DLA Elias, 1989, p. 11) concentrates on the second advancement. One can therefore assume that he had planned to publish a work on each of the three development spurts.

commands were significantly reduced in the course of the twentieth century (see Elias, 2022, p. 33). This, then, was what enabled a shift in the balance of power toward emancipation and reduced the power imbalance in favor of a group of people that had previously been more subordinated.

This kind of shift first leads [...] to insecurity in all involved groups. Some of the old forms of regulating the behavior and feelings of representatives of various groups in relation to one another are being dissolved, others are arising only slowly in the process of many individual people experimenting with new forms of regulating relations that take the reduction of the power gap into consideration. (Elias, 2022, p. 34)

This equalization in the power balance confronted people with specific problems and conflicts, and the individual personality structure, which appeared—perhaps due to a misperception nourished by social processes of individualization—to be relatively independent from societal developments, was often used to explain such problems. In Elias's words:

Currently many problems arising from the relations between two or more people are often approached as if they can be explained using the character traits or the personality structures of each of these people as they are—independently of the particular relationship. But in many cases, one must take the opposite approach. [...] We can see this quite clearly if we compare the personality structures of men and women from the younger generation in our own time with those of young men and especially young women in former societies, in which the women's social subordination to men was still unshaken and taken as self-evident. But if we look more closely, then we can easily see that in these cases, it is the socially prescribed relations between men and women with their high degree of inequality in the distribution of power that determines the basic character structures and individual behavior. (DLA Elias, n.d., p. 19f.)

The tendency to treat all the difficulties that exist in a relatively egalitarian relationship solely as individual and personal problems of the sexual partner, a tendency that continues to be present today, has the disadvantage that the affected individuals experience these difficulties as something that only happens to them and can be explained purely by looking at the characteristics of their partner (see DLA Elias, n.d., p. 25). Tension and conflicts cannot only be explained from the individual characteristics of

the people involved, however. They are also related to the “socially prescribed structure of gender relations that in turn are rooted in the overarching structure of the respective society” (ibid., p. 26). In other words, they are specific to certain structures.

According to Elias, the current, comprehensive shift toward equalization in gender relations can be differentiated from previous development spurts by six unique features (see ibid., p. 26ff.):

1. The distribution of power between the genders is, for the first time in European history, the same in all social classes.
2. This equalization is not only limited to married men and women, but also to pre-marital and extra-marital sexual contact.
3. Sexual relations have become individualized and are no longer subject to complete institutional control by the family or state and church authorities.
4. The growing gender equality on the labor market and related relative (still not yet complete) decoupling of property (including land) and marriage represents another basis for the individualization of gender relations that did not exist in this form in previous times.
5. New forms of birth control led to a functional separation of sexual enjoyment from procreation, contributing to the shift in gender relations.
6. The rapid pace of this change is one of the primary reasons for social difficulties in gender relations in the second half of the twentieth century.

In terms of sociogenesis, Elias believes that the change in society can best be described with the term “democratization.” Due to extensive democratization processes, the opportunities for power that used to be quite unequally distributed among the interdependent social classes and groups have equalized. This affects the relationship between the governing and governed, parents and children, employers and employees, and also men and women (see ibid., p. 29). The change in human relations toward more democratization was never as far-reaching and pervasive as it is in today’s more developed industrialized societies. The reason for this lies in a specific change in the fabric of human interdependencies, a change that has been observable for quite some time:

In the course of the continually progressing division of functions among people and groups of people, [...] each individual person and each individual group of people is no longer just dependent on more and more other people and groups—the nature of these dependencies is also changing: the long chains of interdependence in which today all individual people form links then bind people so closely together that their dependencies are increasingly mutual or reciprocal. In the end, it is this increased reciprocity of all human interdependencies in the context of ever broader processes of state-building and industrialization that counteracts the stabilization of highly one-sided governance and subordination relationships over longer periods of time. In the short term, of course, there are often new surges in the opposing direction. (ibid., p. 30f.)

Elias believed that this democratization process was and is flanked by public and private formation of a conscience in the same direction, and that this shared conscience is reflected in an increased sensitivity to the one-sided abuse of instruments of power. Surges in the opposing direction (Nazism and other fascist movements are examples) are only mentioned with a single sentence. Current trends away from democracy, for example, those in China, Russia, India, Iran, and even the USA, that is, powerful and populous states, remind us that analyzing de-civilization processes is key to understanding civilization processes. This is the case especially because these countertendencies always also have negative effects on women's rights, that is, gender-specific human rights.

By shifting the overarching social We-I balance, the current development spurt is shifting decision-making competences for cohabitation and the form and shape of this cohabitation onto the affected people. While in previous times (feudal society) families or clans made these decisions, today each person not only may but also must make individual decisions. Beck-Gernsheim therefore speaks of "voluntary compulsion" (Beck-Gernsheim, 1994a, p. 324). The force of compulsion as well as the sense of security it offers have also become much weaker, and in contrast the possibilities and constraints for the people involved to make decisions and choices have grown considerably (see Elias, n.d., p. 33).

In relationships in which opportunities for power are more equal, conflicts and tension arise more openly and require solutions that are satisfactory for both sides. This shift places higher demands on individuals' communication skills and ability to compromise in order to produce a *modus vivendi* that is acceptable for both parties (see also Egen, 2009,

p. 126). The space is expanding for personally sounding out the power balance between men and women. This leads to a reduction in the contrasts between the (less clearly) ruling men and the ruled women and the resulting expansion of gender forms and possibilities for action, in other words, a de-polarization of gender characteristics (see Elias, 2012b, p. 422ff.; Klein & Liebsch, 1997a, p. 12).

As a consequence, additional forms of marriage and families are gradually arising alongside the traditional form (serial monogamy, patchwork families, same-sex partnerships, long-distance relationships, etc.)—according to Beck-Gernsheim, these are all contours of a “post-familial family” (Beck-Gernsheim, 1994b, p. 135) (an expression which unconsciously still clings, much more than Elias does, to the traditional, narrow concept of family) and point toward the increased diversity of lifestyles.

Here we can conclude that an equalization of gender balances is a precondition for the individualization of gender relations as a reflection of functional democratization (see Wouters, 2020). While previously the relationship and power balance in a partnership were prescribed, today each couple must individually work these out (see DLA Elias, n.d., p. 33). Here Elias uses a personal example: “‘Back in my day,’ said my grandfather, ‘a marriage looked like a low-burning hearth fire that slowly warmed up. Today it looks like a bonfire that slowly cools down’” (ibid.).

Traditionally, and well into the twentieth century, the head of the household and husband could fall back on socially divided sources of power to assert his interests. The elimination of the pressure to follow institutions and conventions created a competitive situation between men and women in which not only women felt threatened by men, but in which men also felt threatened by women in their supremacy (see ibid., p. 33). When external constraints no longer completely safeguard partnerships, then the partners are required to exercise much greater self-constraint to maintain the relationship. There is always the danger that the pendulum of power distribution will swing too far to one side. Elias believed that this danger exists in all human relationships and makes a strong point regarding explicitly all democratization processes, and implicitly all processes of civilizing group relations:⁵

⁵ According to Elias, this is especially true for gender relations because they are “connected with the condition of civilization” (DLA Elias, 1985a, p. 41).

In all of these cases, it is part of the structural characteristics of more equal power balances arising as part of the broad wave of equalization that the more complicated and nuanced democratic relations can once again shift into a less complicated, comparatively simpler, authoritarian relationship with its clear-cut superordinate and subordinate relations. Those groups that previously acted as autocratic rulers or their successors can attempt to transform the comparatively more egalitarian power distribution back to their advantage, or the previously [...] oppressed groups, in their exuberant fight against the autocratic oppressors, can unintentionally introduce a balance of power that is just as unequal and themselves become the autocratic oppressors instead of continuing to work on a more equal, egalitarian distribution of power. [...] Apparently, the question is how to stabilize a more precarious, more equal distribution of power in human relationships without each side needing to fear that the balance of power will tip toward the other side, for example, how to protect people from the danger that the oppressed will become the oppressors. (ibid., p. 35)

By its nature, an egalitarian relationship cannot work solely on the basis of a purely affective attraction between two people. This difficulty can only be resolved if the structural conditions that gave rise to the problem are clearly identified and discussed from a perspective other than one that focuses only on individual psychological factors (see ibid., p. 36f.).

The difficulties depend in particular on the speed of societal transformation and how far the social habitus lags behind: In shaping their own gender relationships, adolescents orient themselves not only on relationship role models in their own generation but also on those of the older generations. If a social change takes place rapidly, then this mix gives rise to behavioral uncertainties caused by the difficulties in forming a relationship whose conditions are acceptable for both people (see ibid., p. 39). According to Elias, these difficulties are to be understood as *transitional problems* in the shift from formerly unequal relations to more equal relations (see Ernst et al., 2017).

One result of this change is the fact "that women of all classes are in charge of themselves more than ever before and, metaphorically speaking, are in particular in charge of their own bodies" (DLA Elias, n.d., p. 44).

In his main manuscript (DLA Elias, n.d.), Elias uses empirical material gathered both from contemporary examples from post-colonial Ghana (synchronic comparison) and from German history (diachronic comparison), and here especially uses the example of male succession to continue land ownership. Interestingly, here Elias draws on the theory of the land

monopoly by Franz Oppenheimer, whom, to our knowledge, he mentions nowhere else in his work (DLA Elias, 1985a, p. 29). “In Ghana as in some other parts of Africa, well into the present there was more land than people to work it [...]. In parts of Ghana, land appropriation is a new concept, and land scarcity and land monopolies are just beginning to make themselves felt” (DLA Elias, n.d., p. 48). According to the customs of this society, the children always belong to the mother’s family and not to the father’s (matrilineality). Elias reports of cases “in which a family household only produced male children. There, approximately the same feelings arose as earlier in a European noble family without male progeny. [...] Often enough, in both cases the principal possession, the family land [...], fell to distant relatives or strangers. One can understand that the social belief of a continuation of the line solely through women conveyed upon the female members of a household specific opportunities for power” (DLA Elias, n.d., p. 48). Accordingly, in this society young women had traditionally had sexual leeway that included multiple, changing extramarital sexual partners. With this example, Elias breaks up apparently self-evident facts in the European tradition along with a particular use of the concept of morality: “In European societies, the entrenchment of regulations for relations between the sexes that had arisen as part of a particular development under very specific conditions led to these regulations taking on a strictly dogmatic and absolutist character in the consciences of the individuals, expressed in the concept of morality” (DLA Elias, n.d., p. 48 f.).

From the opposite side, so to speak, he weakens perceptions of apparently fixed *social canons* (Elias, 2022) with references to what he called “andrarchic codes,” a helpful neologism. An extreme case is “the terrifying custom which required a Brahman widow to be burnt alive on a funeral pyre together with her dead husband” (DLA Elias, 1985c, p. 2). He also mentions the period during which “Chinese custom demanded that women should bandage their feet so tightly that they became crippled” (DLA Elias, 1985c, p. 2), a social canon demonstrating the widespread social crippling of women in a drastically explicit physical way. Even in the Western tradition, however, “the continuous, silent, invisible injunctions that the sexually hierarchized world into which [women] are thrown addresses to them” continue to occur (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 56), although this is typically not quite as obvious: “Stringent rules demonstrating in public that women were men’s property or at least inferior to men [...]

were absent from the European code of good behavior. Surprisingly, it demanded instead that men should publicly treat women in a way usually accorded to socially superior and more powerful persons" (DLA Elias, 1985c, p. 3). And another reference was made to the need for terminological work: "the odd gynarchic clues in the intrinsically andrarchic European code show [...] the need for a differentiated vocabulary" (DLA Elias, 1985c, p. 5).

In the self-perception of many groups, it often appears as though the regulation of relations between the sexes that is standard in that group and continually impressed upon new generations from birth cannot be justified or explained nor is such a justification necessary. Above all, the sexual norms in societies tend to embed themselves particularly deeply inside each individual, as the socially ingrained barriers to regulate human desires prove themselves to be especially strict and unforgiving where these desires themselves are especially strict and unforgiving. (DLA Elias, n.d., p. 54)

As accurate as this thought may be in certain respects, talk of erecting barriers to human desires comes close to certain andrarchic codes.

Elias believes one of the greatest difficulties in current gender relations is the ideal of romantic love:

The false expectation awoken by the idea of romantic love is, in other words, the expectation that the strength of the affective connection between two people has a kind of magic effect on them. The myth makes it seem as though love automatically allows two people to live together in harmony. All difficulties between them disappear if only they love each other enough, that is the expectation that the ideal of romantic love awakes, while in reality the difficulties truly begin when a man and a woman fall intensely in love with one another. (ibid., p. 71)

During a transition phase from a lesser to a greater and more egalitarian functional dependency, the tests of strength that arise in the form of tension and conflicts become particularly intense. These tests of strength that occur when two people join themselves together based on their attraction and less on social pressure cannot solely be explained by looking at their personal characteristics. Instead, a large part of these stem from the dynamics of the figuration that the people build together.

These tensions and conflicts cannot be explained only by the personality structures of the individuals but by the figuration structures. We can understand at least the most basic levels of these structural conflicts and tests of strength if we look at them in light of the polarity between the man and woman's desire to be connected to each other and to be autonomous in their relationship to one another, to include the other person in one's own identity and to maintain one's own identity as that of a relatively independent person with an autonomous existence. Moving too much or too little toward one of these poles means danger for both the woman and the man. Finding a balance between melding and maintaining their individual identities that both people find sustainable and enjoyable is not possible without confrontations or tests of strength, which, whatever the specific occasion might be, also always serve as a way to test the relative strength of two people in their relationship to one another. They are a way to test the relative strength of their affection, their desire for each other, the overall strength of their influence on one another, and their mutual connection. Many marriages and many friendships break up in this phase of sounding one another out, testing each other's needs in terms of the need for attachment and the need for autonomy. Other couples get lucky and quickly find a balance that is satisfactory for them both. (*ibid.*, p. 76)

In all of his writings, Elias makes it clear that searching for this balance is not something that affects only individual couples but is true of gender relations overall, as it is "connected with the condition of civilization. Sensitivity on the part of men for the condition of women and vice versa, of women for the condition of men, a relatively high level of civilized restraint [...], a civilizing spurt was one of the conditions for the emergence of more egalitarian forms of sex relations in ancient Rome. I still believe it to be one of the conditions in our own time" (DLA Elias, 1985c, p. 42).

6 SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

These manuscripts clearly show how intensively Elias worked on the topic of gender relations, especially in his later years. In no way did he ignore this important topic, but, as with so many manuscripts, he did not succeed in finishing them. This meant that, with one exception, none of his drafts made it to the public.

The long-term perspective developed in the manuscripts is valuable because it describes current problems as they were arising and embeds

relationship problems that are often viewed as problems of individual couples into their social context, explaining them in this way. Elias himself pursued a quite practical objective:

Maybe it is helpful to explicitly state that the focus here is on making sociological problems that have surprisingly been almost entirely neglected up to now more accessible to being investigated as problems. It is about creating a conceptual framework that leads us to and enables more systematic individual studies and that itself can be reviewed with the results of these studies and, when necessary, revised or disposed of entirely to be replaced by a better framework. Without these individual studies, in many cases we currently cannot say with any certainty: This is the solution to the problem that was posed. At best, we can tentatively point out possibilities for how to solve it. (DLA Elias, *n.d.*, p. 44)

Consequently, Elias introduces new terms for describing and explaining the change (equalization spurt, andrarchy, and especially andrarchic codes) that he believes reflect reality better than familiar terms like family, marriage, marriage ceremony, or nature. Elias especially picks up the concept of nature and dissolves its traditional dichotomous link with the opposing term of culture, instead replacing it with a more realistic, interrelated form of connection. For Elias, nature is particularly interesting because the dichotomous form is one of the classics of andrarchic thinking, in which nature and culture are more or less explicitly made into an analogy of women (nature) and men (culture). Elias dismantles this type of andrarchic thinking, but he does not discuss the content mentioned.

As inspiring as a long-term perspective to explain current problems in gender relations may be, here we do need to point out a few of Elias's blind spots. For example, it cannot be ignored that violence against women is widespread even in the relatively egalitarian partner relationships of the present day. For 2021, the criminal statistics for domestic violence in partner relationships in Germany (Bundeskriminalamt, 2022) show that nearly 150,000 people were subjected to violence within their partner relationships. Over 80 percent of these acts were committed against women, and just as many of the suspected perpetrators were men. In 2021, 114 women in Germany were killed by their current or former partner. It is possible that the long-term perspective taken by Elias might obstruct the view of this virulent issue and thus may not focus on it. One can see that women's legal rights in partnerships are being strengthened over time, for example,

by the German Bundestag recognizing rape in marriage as a criminal act in 1997. However, this should not make us lose sight of the fact that many women are still exposed to violence from their partner. We could draw on international gender research here and its concept of “hegemonic masculinity” (Connell, 1999), for example, as a fruitful explanatory model. This term refers to “an uncompromising understanding of masculinity that, unfazed by feminism and equalizing trends, seeks to secure the supremacy of ‘real’ men, including by drawing a distinction between them and gay men” (Treibel, 2014, p. 21). Elias does not include homosexual men or same-sex relationships in general in his observations, something that might be particularly surprising given that Elias himself seems to have had homosexual leanings (see Jitschin, 2021, p. 245f. and 346f.). However, in at least one instance Elias gives an indication as to why he leaves out homosexual relationships: “The entire set of problems related to homosexual relationships without any sexual overtones and especially those with sexual overtones would lead us too far beyond the set of problems discussed here” (DLA Elias, n.d., p. 69). In his manuscripts, Elias focuses on the classic gender relations made up of women and men, analyzing these based on changing social structures. Without a doubt, this is commendable and highly relevant. However, he seems to assume a natural duality of the genders that had already begun to be discussed controversially as the manuscripts were being written and clearly falls short from a modern perspective. The discourse on the deconstruction of sex and gender initiated by Butler (1990) led to the field of queer studies, which focuses not on categories of “male” and “female,” nor on heteronormativity, but especially on homosexuality as well as trans- and intersexuality. This relativizes femininity and masculinity, but does not eliminate them entirely (see Butler, 1990).

One can only speculate as to whether Elias’s sole focus on heterosexual partner relationships is due to the era in which he took up the topic, or whether he might have felt fearful or defensive in light of his presumed own homosexuality and was therefore not yet able to include categories that were not heteronormative. Reading the unpublished manuscripts is worthwhile for understanding “classic” gender relations and their long-term processes of change toward more equality between men and women as well as the associated problems of negotiation within partner relationships.

7 CONCLUSION

We have mapped out the topic "civilizing sex relations" (DLA Elias, 1989, p. 5), one part of overarching processes of civilization, as a recurring theme in the fragments left by Elias on his planned book "Changing balance of power between the sexes in the history of civilization," as he formulated the title in his "Lettura del Mulino" in 1985 in Bologna. And indeed, he offers numerous substantial pieces of evidence for a long-term process of civilization in gender relations, most recently linked to processes of functional democratization.

However, perhaps based on contraphobia due to his mother being murdered by the Nazis in Auschwitz or the Theresienstadt concentration camp, and the overall shock of the National-Socialist breakdown of civilization, Elias took frequent but only rudimentary looks at counter processes, with the one exception being the studies on "The Germans" (Elias, 1998). These processes of decivilization include the production of unconsciousness in the process of civilization as shown by Erdheim (1990, 1996), the "Escape from freedom" analyzed by Fromm (1993), the growing inequality of capital formation proven by Piketty (2015), and de-democratization (Levitzky & Ziblat, 2018) up to and including fascist tendencies of all kinds. This also applies to the underlying intensity of misogynistic patterns of thinking and acting, as they are pointed out in feminist literature and works such as "Masculine Domination" by Bourdieu (2001) or Theweleit's critical analysis of the "Origins of the Anti-Female Armor" (Theweleit, 1987, p. 300ff.) In Elias's writings, one also searches in vain for certain ambivalences regarding women's emancipation, especially the risk that it is being reached by taking over the andrarchic behavioral code (see especially Pfister, 1997; also Ginal, 2019; Minnich, 1994). However, his streams of thought are strongly oriented on processes, relationships, and balances that undermine the rigid codes of male domination, but to a certain degree, this is counteracted by a lack of attention to female perspectives. Over time, he brings the balance aspect of gender relations, which is the central aspect of the unpublished manuscripts, into better focus, presumably because another balance, that of involvement and detachment, grew more equitable in his sociological development from the 1950s until the 1980s.

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