

Female Biography Analysis

Identity Constructions in Male-dominated vs. Female-dominated Professions

The research project of Marita Haas aims to compare identity constructions of women in male- vs. female-dominated professions, in detail in science and technology vs. pedagogy. The focus is placed on the following central questions: What do individual biographies in science and technology vs. biographies in pedagogy look like? How do women deal with their (female) role in the professional field? How do these women construct their identities? Are gender and professional identities constructed differently in the two professional fields? How are these constructions interrelated?

The research approach refers to the principles of figuration sociology (Elias 1987) and puts the focus on the investigated women, and the way women perceive their biographies. Women's self-perceptions and identity constructions in male-dominated vs. female-dominated professional environments are explored on the basis of narrative-biographical interviews (Schütze 1983). To thoroughly investigate identity constructions in the two contrasting professions, one part of the sample will be confronted with a typical, summarized life story from the opposite professional field. Given the comparative perspective of the investigation, a negotiation process with one's own biography, revealing deeper insight into the differences and similarities to other biographies, is expected (Appelsmeyer 1996).

The background of the study is based on i) the theory of "dual socialization" and the fact that women's lives are still based on family *and* work (Becker-Schmidt 1987) and ii) the segregation of professions and professional hierarchies according to gender aspects (Wetterer 2002; Teubner 2009). Above that, the focus of Marita Haas' recent research was on female career paths in science and technology. Results showed how identity constructions of female scientists relate to their minority status as a woman in a male-dominated profession (Haas, Keinert et al. 2011). In this context, the suggested research project follows the proposition that every profession has its inherent (gender) rules and (role) expectations and that these factors shape and interrelate with (female) biographies.

This suggested project investigates interrelations between identity constructions and the (male- or female-dominated) professional life history. This research will provide contributions to constructivist approaches and to the social theory on the interrelation of biographies with gender and professions. Furthermore, results will extend existing biographical models for women.

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