

Global historical sociology and *connected* gender sociologies

On the colonial legacy and (re)nationalization of gender

Heidemarie Winkel

At first glance, the relevance of historical sociology for gender sociology is evident; the temporal and spatial confinement of gender relations is a basic gender-theoretical concern (Fraisie 1995). But while the relation between social theory—that is, the analysis of causal agents and mechanisms (Calhoun 1998; Mahoney 2004)—and historical perspectives has been deepened since the 1970s and resulted in a renewal of historical sociology in the US,¹ »the »engagement« of feminism and historical sociology has been marked by neither romance nor passion« (Adams 1997, 5). Gender sociology has primarily aimed at placing gender as an analytical category in the mainstream of social theory (Smith 1989; Brück et al. 1992; Wharton 2005; Gildemeister and Hericks 2012). Accordingly, gender sociologists have focused on varying social mechanisms that contribute to the reproduction of gender as a central category of social inequality and power asymmetry in different fields of social life like labor, politics or education; for example, on the micro-level of gendered practices, on the meso-level of gendered organizations, or on the macro-level of gendered structures, institutions, and discourse constellations. The (comparative) reconstruction of gender-historical developments as—institutionally and socio-culturally—sequential processes, or as historical

1 This new historical sociology ranges from comparative approaches and theories of social change to new institutionalism, network analysis, and culture-theoretical approaches. Although classical historical sociology had developed in Germany, there is no corresponding research program today (Mikl-Horke 1994; Spohn 1996, 1998, 2000; Schützeichel 2004, 2013).

figurations and their causal mechanisms, is not a major research agenda in gender sociology, neither in the US nor in Germany. As a result, the relevance of gender in colonial history—which I consider pivotal for a comprehensive understanding of contemporary societies, particularly in times of global migration—is relegated to a back seat.

This lack of interest in historical approaches in gender sociology is reflected by the way current political controversies about gender in European societies are discussed in terms of theory. These controversies are characterized by fierce opposition to various gender-political agendas, for example, gender equality policies such as gender mainstreaming, or queer sexual politics (Kováts and Pöim 2015; Gutiérrez Rodríguez, Tuczu, and Winkel 2018). In Germany, the public debate has been shifting in a new direction particularly since 2014.² At that time the Dresden-based populist movement *Pegida*³ started its anti-Islamic protest against asylum policies; right from the beginning, gender and sexuality were cornerstones of othering migrants and asylum seekers.⁴ This is also evidenced by debates ranging from the securitization of migration (Lazaridis and Wadia 2015) to »Arab men’s sexuality.«⁵ What surprises many gender researchers

2 Juliane Lang and Ulrich Peters (2018, 13–15), Sabine Hark and Paula-Irene Villa (2015), and Imcke Schmincke (2018) date a first wave of the new anti-feminism in 2006, when gender politics were increasingly discussed in various German print and online media, including right-wing forums, and in the growing anti-feminist men’s movement, the so-called masculinists (Gesterkamp 2010; Rosenbrock 2012; Kemper 2011; 2012; Claus 2014).

3 Pegida is an acronym for *Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes* (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident) (Heim 2017).

4 This is expressed in the assertion of a categorical »cultural incommensurability« of gender beliefs that is based on a supposed contrast between »the liberal-emancipatory bourgeois gender model« on the one hand and »migrants’ questionable gender beliefs« on the other, for instance in terms of human rights (Rumpf, Gerhard, and Jansen 2003; Winkel 2017a).

5 A controversial debate about »Arab sexism« and »sexually aggressive Muslim men« arose after the incidents in Cologne on New Year’s Eve 2015. The contrasting contributions of Kira Kosnick (2016), who identified culturally

about this new wave of anti-feminism, is less the intersection of sexism and racism. This seems to be a »known feature« whose mechanisms were, for instance, discussed in the »headscarf debates« in France and Germany in the early 2000s (Weber 2004; Delmas 2006; Amir Moazami 2007; Amiraux 2016; Korteweg and Yurdakul 2016). It is rather the vehemence with which anti-feminism is directed against gender politics in general and gender studies in particular that has shaken the interdisciplinary research field (Frey et al. 2013; Hark and Villa 2015; Bauschke-Urban et al. 2016; Dreier, Schmincke, and Wolff 2017). It seems that not only the societal consensus about gender equality as a legal standard (expressed in the notion of gender mainstreaming) and about sexual diversity as a human rights norm have been dismissed by positions claiming themselves »critical of genderism,«⁶ but the field of gender studies itself is discredited. In the program of the extreme right-wing party *Alternative for Deutschland* (AfD), gender studies are identified as a central representative of »the gender ideology« (AfD 2017, 41) that is accused of being »unconstitutional, as it »marginalizes the natural differences between the sexes« (AfD 2017, 40).⁷

Historically, this anti-genderism is the latest socio-historical expression of several waves of anti-feminism since the nineteenth century, not only in Germany, but also in other European contexts. Like their predecessors, the new anti-feminists mount their argumentation on the assumed naturalness of the gender order based on two allegedly incommensurable sexes.⁸ And like nineteenth-century anti-feminism, anti-genderism is strongly intertwined with extreme right-wing, nationalist ideologies (Decker et al. 2010;

racist positions in the Germany-wide media debate, and Susanne Schröter (2016), who demanded that gender norms legitimating violence be named, are characteristic examples.

6 This term is used on the anti-feminist website WikiMANNia, whose style is polemic, not popular scientific.

7 Translated from German into English by the author.

8 However, studies in genetics and developmental biology demonstrate that bodily structures are anatomically and physiologically flexible (e.g., neuronal plasticity), formed by an interplay between active use, societal influence, and genetically based processes (Palm 2016).

Zick et al. 2011) and with racist worldviews (Planert 1996, 1998, 2010; Bruns 2003). In the background of these political shifts are the socio-economic ruptures that have become visible particularly since the finance and banking crises of 2008/2009 (Crouch 2011; Kurz-Scherf and Scheele 2012). Although neo-liberal capitalism is a primary cause for the (global) consolidation of sociopolitical and economic inequalities, the language in which criticism develops is largely nationalist, right-wing extremist, and populist; it includes not only opposition against gender equality and diversity politics, but also turns against migrants, and unfolds in the form of the normalization of racist identity politics and the »protection« of borders, families, and the nation (Wodak 2016; Grigat 2017; Gutiérrez Rodríguez, Tuczu, and Winkel 2018).

The socio-historical parallel to nineteenth-century nationalism and crises debates in the German Empire is remarkable; around 1900, »the gender and women's question« was considered to be a »central cultural problem« of its time (Lichtblau 1996, 281). This was embedded in pessimistic discourses about the »fragility« of national-cultural identity and women's symbolic relevance for the nation's consolidation (Koselleck 1959; Yuval-Davis 1997), which resulted from the political revolutions and from the large-scale economic, political, and social changes in the course of industrialization. The relevance of »the women's question« was also reflected in debates about »the colonial question« and the way colonialists approached gender issues in the colonies (Dietrich 2007); it was characterized by a categorical differentiation between colonized and *white*,⁹ European women. Accordingly, the classification of the colonized in terms of race became »a necessary condition« of the bourgeois gender order; overall, this order is part of a colonial gender system (Lugones 2007, 202). In the further course of history, gender-centered notions of nationhood were reproduced and recoded in Nazi Germany in terms of its fascist ideology (Koonz 1991; Räthzel 1995). After the Nazi dictatorship had been defeated, a new wave of nationalism and racism burgeoned in

9 The term *white* is italicized throughout the text; it does not denote a color, but the power asymmetry that privileges *white* persons in relation to *non-whites* (Dietze 2010).

the early 1980s. Xenophobia increased, primarily due to the growing number of migrants in Western industrial countries; in Germany, »constructions of the German nation and of ›*Ausländer* (foreigners) were reformulated« (Räthzel 1995, 161–62). In this regard »gender was inserted into national discourse« (Räthzel 1994, 81) as a medium that allows for the assertion of cultural differences between »us« and »them« as an own type of racism (Hall 1994). After Germany's so-called reunification, a new, European nationalism emerged in the early 1990s (Brah 1993) in which women's symbolic role once more became central (Lutz, Phoenix, and Yuval-Davis 1995; Hobsbawm 1991, 1994; Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989; Yuval-Davis 1997). The symbolic relevance of gender was taken up again in the »headscarf debates« in the early 2000s; this was also the time when the NSU terror spread.¹⁰

Against this backdrop, it is plausible that current gender-sociological analysis prioritizes a post-structuralist, discursive diagnosis of the times within the boundaries of European nation states (e.g., Hark and Villa 2015, 2017). But it is noteworthy that neither is the intersection of nationalism, sexism and racism examined as a continuous process throughout the twentieth century, nor are gender-*historical* approaches (systematically) consulted in the analysis of anti-genderism, with rare exceptions, such as Ute Planert's study on anti-feminism in the German Empire (Planert 1998). Likewise, historical or postcolonial studies about the relevance of the bourgeois gender order for colonization and imperialism are not (re)considered (Schiebinger 1993; McClintock 1995; Stoler 1995; Yegenoglu 1998; Pratt 2008).¹¹ I assume that this lack of interest in historical development paths reflects the »status« of post- and decolonial theories in gender

10 NSU is an acronym for *Nationalist Socialist Underground*. It is a group of Neo-Nazis that is responsible for the murder of nine immigrants of Turkish, Greek and Kurdish descent between 2000 and 2006 (Schmincke and Siri 2013).

11 The relevance of intersectionality itself has been discussed widely, but mainly against the backdrop of migration in European societies (Gümen 2001; Davis 2008; Winker and Degele 2009; Lutz, Herrera Vivar, and Supik 2011).

sociology. Postcolonialism has developed as a theoretical formation of critique since the 1950s and 1960s and became prominent in Germany in the 1990s as a research stream within *transdisciplinary gender studies* (Kerner 2009, 2012). But just like mainstream sociology, gender sociology in Germany has not engaged with postcolonial thinking in a differentiated manner.¹² Against this backdrop, I suppose that gender sociology is losing track of the colonial shape of nation(alism) and its intersection with gender; the same applies to post- and decolonial approaches that aim to uncover the continuity of colonial knowledge and meaning structures as a specific mode of power asymmetry in the present. Colonial patterns are not only entrenched in the socio-historical constitution of European societies' and their self-conceptions, but also in the way this has been studied and reflected in sociological thinking (Go 2013, 2016). Accordingly, I understand anti-genderists' stance as an indicator of European societies' and sociology's colonial legacy; it is a result of the consistent (re)nationalization of gender throughout the twentieth century, rooted in nineteenth-century nationalism and colonialism. This anti-genderism affects *white* women and women of color alike, albeit in very different ways; but first and foremost, anti-genderism involves *white* women *against* women of color: the heteronormative agenda turns against equality and sexual diversity politics *and* women of color. This insight can be strengthened by a systematic consideration of *global* historical sociology and its current further development toward postcolonial sociology (Boatcă, Costa and Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010; Bhambra 2014; Go 2013, 2016; Go and Lawson 2017).

Hence, the aim of this contribution is not to analyze the anti-genderist attacks and polemics in detail, but to take anti-genderism, and the legacy of nationalism and colonialism, as a starting point to discuss the impact of historical sociology's recent shift toward post- and decolonial approaches

12 This holds true despite the works of Reuter and Karentzos (2012), Boatcă, Costa, and Gutiérrez Rodríguez (2010), Go (2013), and Bhambra (2014), which have no specific gender focus. Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez's (1996, 1999) and Manuela Boatcă's writings (Boatcă 2015; Boatcă and Roth 2016) are exceptions.

in gender sociology. My observation that historical approaches seem to be of only minor interest in gender sociology leads to two working assumptions: first, although gender history has always played a decisive role in understanding the social constitution of the bourgeois gender order in the transition process to the modern era, gender sociology's relation to (global) historical sociology can be characterized as a loose coupling. This has caused a blind spot regarding gender sociology's own imperial standpoint in the system of knowledge production and its enmeshment with colonial epistemic legacies (Go 2016, 8f.). Against this backdrop, anti-genderism comes into view as signifier of a critical juncture in the developmental paths¹³ of current Western, European societies that—once again—are »reinventing« themselves with recourse to nationalism, racism, and related (colonial) gender ideologies. This leads to the second working assumption: taking the socio-historical legacy of nineteenth- and twentieth-century struggles about (anti-)feminism, nationalism, racism, and colonialism into consideration will shed a different light on current controversies only if this is embedded in an approach that takes connected, entangled colonial histories (Randeria 1999; Bhambra 2007, 2014) and decolonial thinking systematically into account (Go 2013; Connell 2014, 2018). A global, decolonial historical approach reveals the legacy of colonial knowledge structures in the present and how they are based on nationalism and gender as well as related epistemes of difference and hierarchization (Mignolo 2002).

This is not meant as a fundamental critique of poststructuralist approaches and diagnoses of the time; it is rather an indication that mirrors the sociopolitical pressure, the cultural hegemony, and the enduring legacy under which gender researchers can unfold their research agendas.¹⁴ As

13 The notion of the critical juncture in developmental paths is discussed by Thelen and Steinmo (1992) and Katznelson (1997).

14 The political vehemence with which anti-feminism is directed against gender research (and politics) nourishes a situation in which gender studies have long been part of a gender dispositive and have become absorbed by the dispositive's discursive powers, which gender studies actually aim to deconstruct. The notion of the dispositive is borrowed from Foucault (1978).

in the debates at the turn of the nineteenth century and in the second half of the twentieth century, gender takes center stage in contemporary controversies as a core element of a worldview according to which gendered national societies continue to be a fundamental institutional frame of the social order. In this regard, the agenda-setting that anti-genderist discourses pursue unfolds in the national(ist) domain of *white*, colonial knowledge production. On the surface, the focus of attention is on »the natural order« and on liberal rights, but at the core is a *white* nationalist, heteronormative and racialized gender code. In this regard *white/ness* denotes the power asymmetry that privileges *white* persons, veils their claim to superiority, and accordingly subordinates *non-whites* (Dietze 2010). Consequently, this contribution aims to reflect the extent to which gender sociology is built on a colonial body of *white* gender knowledge. The central question is how a global historical sociology approach can enable gender sociology to decolonize its knowledge reservoir and to decode the permanent (re)nationalization of gender as a *white* nationalist and colonial legacy throughout modern social history. This includes the conviction that knowledge production is always socially situated and that there is no universality, but a social reality of multiple cognitive models and epistemic possibilities. Finally, a deeper understanding of the present hostility to gender studies and gender politics can be achieved if gender sociology broadens its theoretical, epistemological, and empirical scope concerning the colonial legacy of the *white* nationalist gender code in the direction of entangled, *connected* sociologies (Randeria 1999; Conrad and Randeria 2002; Bhambra 2014; Patel 2006, 2014, 2015). This is based on the assumption that the anti-genderist agenda is not primarily based on the renaturalization of sex, for example due to its focus on reproductive rights, but rather on the renationalization of gender. This will be discussed exploratively in the following steps: First, I will sketch historical sociology's marginal role for gender sociology in contrast to the relevance of gender history; in this regard, I will also reflect on the extent to which colonial histories have been of secondary analytical relevance in gender sociology up to now. In a second step, I will discuss how far gender sociology developed as a *white* form of knowledge production that continues to nourish the colonial legacy of gender until

today. Third, I will touch on the question how a global, decolonial historical sociology of gender makes the continuation of colonial epistemologies in present-day societies visible and to what extent this furthers a deeper understanding of the current (re)nationalization of gender. All in all, this contribution aims at providing a broader understanding of how global historical sociology matters for gender sociology.

Historical sociology and gender sociology: Loose coupling and the nationalist gender code

Until today, gender sociology has benefited tremendously from gender history's contribution to the analysis of structural transitions and the recoding of gender beliefs in the modern era as a social process of women's political and economic exclusion in European nation states. Gender historians illustrated how the social positioning of women in the private sphere developed and how the semantics of the »natural division of labor« was legitimated by the notion of two categorically different sexes (Laqueur 1992), the tropes about women's distinct character (Hausen 1976), and the impropriety of female labor (Scott 1994).¹⁵ While women were assigned to unpaid reproduction work and legally confined by the marriage contract (Gerhard 2005), the private sphere of the family was politically revalued as an integral element of the nation (Planert 2000). Gender historians paved the way for a substantial understanding of how the gender contract based on the differentiation between the private and the political sphere was institutionalized (Pateman 1988) and how it was reasoned by concepts such as traditional domesticity, intimacy, and »work out of love« (Bock and Duden 1977), as if this had been the »traditionally« legitimated order of life that had always existed (Winkel 2017b). These gender-historical insights are basic pillars of macro-sociological accounts, for example of knowledge-based studies on the differentiation of the heteronormative, bourgeois gender order. Claudia Honegger's analysis (1991) of the shifting of anthropological knowledge in the late eighteenth

15 For further studies on nineteenth-century transformations see Ute Gerhard (1978, 1990, 2005), Ute Frevert (1986 and 1995), Rebekka Habermas (1992), or Gisela Bock (2000).

and nineteenth century is a paradigmatic example, as are Michel Foucault's studies (1978, 1983) on the growing interest in sexuality as an object of knowledge production and social control or Sabine Hark's reconstruction (1996) of lesbian subjectivity as a social product of specific forms of seeing, knowing, and experiencing the world around 1900.

Despite the importance of gender history for gender sociology, the latter has never developed an intimate theoretical relationship with historical sociology. This also holds true for general sociology in Germany, although it was the birthplace of classical historical sociology. In contrast to the US, where a new historical sociology had developed since the 1970s, historical sociology emerged only slowly in Germany; accordingly, a common theoretical program is lacking (Mikl-Horke 1994; Spohn 2000; Schützeichel 2013). Following Theda Skocpol's reconstruction (1984) of historical sociology in the US, three approaches are usually differentiated (Spohn 2000; Schützeichel 2013): first, model-theoretical approaches such as Charles Tilly's studies (1978, 1984, 1993, 1994, 1996) on state formation and democratization, and second, causally determined, comparative analyses, for example the study by Rueschemeyer, Huber-Stephens, and Stephens (1992) on varying political modernization paths (including fascism) or Theda Skocpol's (1992) historical-sequential analysis of state-formation processes that focus on political institutions or labor markets and welfare systems, including gendered welfare policies. The third approach includes interpretive historical analyses, which have been strongly influenced by neo-institutionalism and cultural studies, such as Shmuel Eisenstadt's multiple modernities perspective (2000, 2006a, 2006b) or Anthony Smith's (1986) prominent study on the ethnic origin of nations; it examines developmental paths of ethno-national *Gemeinschaft* within nation states. Post- and decolonial perspectives have been »added on« to these three approaches for roughly the past decade (Bhambra 2007, 2014; Boatcă, Costa, and Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010; Go 2013, 2017).¹⁶

Gender relations have primarily been studied in causally determined approaches of historical sociology; for example, the gendering of welfare

16 I thank the reviewers who encouraged me to point this out.

systems. A main focus within this research field is the making of North American and European welfare systems, maternity, and labor politics.¹⁷ This is embedded in analyses of the rise of capitalism and the nation state as a typical macro-feature of historical sociology. These studies demonstrate that gender indeed is important for understanding the origins and the development of institutional arrangements in national welfare systems, for example, when women are not (only) addressed as workers, but as potential mothers (Skocpol 1992; Skocpol and Ritter 1991). But this did not lead into a distinct historical sociology of gender, although a number of highly influential works has been published since the 1990s in this field.¹⁸ In general, historical sociology has been gender-blind until today, while gender sociology has never experienced a historical turn, particularly in Germany—not to mention on a global scale, except for rare examples.¹⁹ In the last three decades, gender sociology has predominantly been structured by the micro turn and the poststructuralist turn, but historical sociologists doubt that social transformation can be approached as a set of discursive arenas only. According to Julia Adams (1997, 4), »feminist methodologies—from the discourse theoretic to standpoint variants—are too narrow to grasp the sorts of social and cultural transformations that interest historical sociologists.« Adams suggests that large-scale socio-historical processes could be broken down into narrative elements and reassembled in analytical sequences, but this would also require a historical contextualization and—what is equally

17 With the exception of Mounira Charrad (2001), who focuses on the MENA region.

18 For example, Jane Lewis (1980, 1991), Theda Skocpol (1992), Seth Koven and Sonya Michel (1990, 1993), Gisela Bock and Pat Thane (1991), as well as Gisela Bock and Susan James (1992), or Ann Shola Orloff (1993); cf. O'Connor, Orloff, and Shaver (1999) and Julia Adams (2005); cf. Clemens, Adams, and Orloff (2005), Adams and Charrad (2015).

19 Cf., for example, Nitza Berkovitch (2001) or Bettina Heintz and Annette Schnabel (2006).

important to her—»an analysis of bounded institutional sites and system-specific institutional mechanisms« (ibid.).

But gender sociology does not only differ from historical sociology in terms of the latter's systematic interest in the origin of institutional settings and their transformation. In the past two decades, historical sociology has also broadened its scope of interest increasingly in a global direction, while gender sociology, for example in Germany, seems to be strengthening its focus on Western, European contexts, particularly with regard to the neoliberal regime change of the last decade.²⁰ Since 2008–9, the effects of the global financial and economic crises on national welfare and labor market policies, particularly austerity politics and neoliberal labor regimes, have taken center stage in gender-sociological analysis (Aulenbacher, Riegraf, and Theobald 2014; Walby 2015; Aulenbacher, Riegraf, and Völker 2015). The hegemony of global economic regimes has, of course, not been neglected, but the hegemony of »the global North« is primarily envisioned as a discursive phenomenon in global capitalism. As a result, one of the challenges that gender sociologists are currently focusing on is the renewal of the structural dependency between reproductive work (now conceptualized as care work) and labor as a main line of inequality in Western, European nation states. This is indeed the place where heteronormative gender-political agendas are consistently being reinstitutionalized, e.g. in the form of welfare and family policies. But accordingly, there is a priority for the analysis of institutional settings and cultural persistence in specific state formations without a systematic historical sociological agenda.

In comparison, the relevance of global institutional settings and developments, for example of equality rights (Heintz and Schnabel 2006) or of global care chains and transnational female migration, are not neglected (Lutz 2009, 2011; Kerner 2009). But these discussions also reveal once more the relevance of national institutional parameters: The empirical reality of global care chains, for example, does not undermine the gendering of institutional frameworks in national labor, family, and

20 Raewyn Connell (2010, 2011) is an exception.

welfare policies—or in national migration policies. The same holds true for the supranational level of the European Union. The cases in which European national governments avoid or subvert European regulations are generally increasing; gender mainstreaming is a striking example (O'Connor 2014).²¹ As a result, both the global and the supranational level mirror the continuing relevance of national policy frames. Overall, although gender has been discursively weakened in its function as a universal category of belonging and social positioning in the last decades of the twentieth century, and although it is highly disputed and negotiated on the micro-level, which has even led to a shift of the symbolic order, as Tomke König (2012) has argued, gender seems to be experiencing a renaissance as an institutionally »well-embedded« category of social difference and inequality in the framework of the nation-state.

As a consequence of this situation, a particular gender-historical insight fades into the background. For nearly three decades, gender historians have shown that the bourgeois gender order in Western, European societies is not only constituted on the principle of sexual difference and the denigration of homosexuality, but rather on racialized difference in relation to the colonial Other, who is categorized as »oppressed and requiring liberation« (McClintock 1995; Stoler 1995; Yegenoglu 1998; Schiebinger 1993). Consequently, the bourgeois gender order has to be seen as a threefold hegemonic project, not only in terms of the heteronormative gender matrix which ensured women's position in the domestic sphere within the heterosexual marriage contract (Gerhard 2005), while homosexual love was pathologized as deviant (Hark 1996). The bourgeois gender order also signifies the continuing existence of a *white*, colonial body of gender knowledge (Winkel 2018a, 2018b). In the societal, but also in the (gender-)sociological consciousness, this equally important third pillar of the national, bourgeois-capitalist society stayed on the sidelines, but is now very visible in the extremist nationalist debates. The way gender is disputed by anti-genderists signifies its continuing relevance as

21 The unsuccessful endeavor to govern migration is another example, not just since 2015 (Lesińska 2014).

a cornerstone of the nationalist agenda²² throughout the second half of the twentieth century; or in other words: it signifies the (re)nationalization of gender and its *white*, colonial legacy in view of growing globalization and migration. Gender never lost its relevance as a colonial, nationalist code throughout social history. How gender sociology developed as a *white* form of knowledge production that nourishes the coloniality of gender will be deepened below.

Gender sociology and the coloniality of gender

In the 1990s, a paradigm shift toward the inclusion of further axes of social differentiation besides gender, such as ethnicity and national belonging or class, was put into effect in gender sociology (Gümen 2001). In parallel, women of color, and here particularly Afro-German women, had started to discuss racism (and anti-Semitism) in the public realm as well as in women's and gender studies (Mamozai 1982; Hügel et al. 1993; Gümen 1996; Gutiérrez Rodríguez 1996; Oguntoye 1997; Ayim 1997).²³ While »classical women's sociology« had focused on the gender binary only—with the effect of its methodological reification, as Regine Gildemeister and Angelika Wetterer summarized the situation in 1992—the conceptualization of women as one homogenous category (in contrast to men) was now criticized as ignorant regarding inequalities and (structural as well as institutional) racism *among* women. This criticism furthered a conceptual pluralization of gender as a sociological category of analysis, which has been expressed in the notion of intersectionality. Intersectionality

22 This insight is inspired by Michiko Mae (2014) who describes this as the nexus of nation, culture, and gender from a cultural studies perspective, taking the shifting of gender relations in Japan as empirical example.

23 A list of more than 70 publications (both academic and political) on »Early Debates on Racism and Anti-Semitism in the (Women's and) Lesbian Movement in West Germany in the 1980s, collected by Christiane Leidinger (2010) for the history brochure 2 of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (edited by Marcel Bois and Bernd Hüttner) is published on the website of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation; accessed Nov. 20, 2018, <https://www.rosalux.de/news/id/3860/fruehe-debatten-um-rassismus-und-antisemitismus-in-der-frauen-und-lesbenbewegung-in-den-1980er-ja/>.

has predominantly been analyzed as the entanglement of multiple oppressions on the level of the individual. But the concept also denotes that women do not constitute a homogenous category and that *white* women are part of racism (Davis 1981; Hill Collins 2000; Crenshaw 1991; Barkley Brown 1992). As a result, the structural inequality between *white* and *non-white* women slipped from (analytical) attention; in other words: *white* women's share in structural, institutional, or everyday discrimination has been made theoretically invisible. Instead, *white* women are considered to represent the norm(ality).

This is a core element of critical whiteness theory, where *whiteness* is understood as a hegemonic position in a power relation in which being *white* is usually un-thematized, while *non-whiteness* is problematized (Dietze 2010, 222). This is reflected in the way »the German Nation« and nationalism were reconstructed in the early 1980s (Räthzel 1995, 169). As Nora Räthzel points out, this is expressed in terms of a »threshold of tolerance« or of »fear of *Ausländer*« as a »natural reaction« (Räthzel 1995, 175–76). Sociopolitical conflicts such as unemployment, housing, schooling, or social order are discussed »in connection with ›*Ausländer*‹, namely as a »conflict between the ›internal« and the ›external« and as a question of loyalty to the nation (Räthzel 1995, 177). This New Racism finds multiple expressions all over Europe within discourses of the New Right, for example as anti-Jewish, anti-Turkish, or as anti-Muslim sentiment in the 1990s. A characteristic feature of racism is the reference to cultural difference as a means of symbolic boundary making. Furthermore, »racism is always (.) gendered« (Brah 1993, 12). Typically, men and women from racialized groups are differentiated from »the nation« and its gender order. I argue that these patterns follow a colonial matrix that can be retraced to colonialism (Dietrich 2007). According to Avtar Brah (1993, 17), these cultural inscriptions follow a particular political economy: they »develop against a background of economic restructuring such as high levels of unemployment« or austerity politics, namely in the name of a free-market philosophy that is combined with social authoritarianism centered on the nation, presumed dangers of cultural decline, and so-called gender values. This allows for both: the denigration of »foreigners' gender

views« as well as of feminism, where necessary. Anti-genderism is a telling example in this regard that mirrors the socio-historical continuation of nationalism, racism, and related gender ideologies in its own way.

What does this mean for gender sociology? It points to the necessity to reconsider how far the socio-cultural construction of gender as a category of knowledge and meaning has been (re)produced as a *white*, asymmetric cognitive frame of explanation, so that its ongoing relevance as part of the nationalist code was relegated to the backstage until the anti-genderists put it in center stage. This also means reconsidering how gender was (whether unintentionally or not) reproduced as a *white* colonial knowledge category based on a matrix of multifold intersecting differences. This includes, first, bringing to mind the relevance of »the gender question« for colonialism and *white* women's participation in this regard. Second, it means considering colonial continuities on the epistemic level, that is, on the level of our ways of knowing and experiencing the world, for example in gender-sociological terms. Before I discuss the issue of decolonization (gender) sociology more deeply, I will sketch in an excursus why gender and ethnicity are two cognitive cornerstones within the institutional frame of the nation-state that finally furthers the status of gender as a *white* and colonial analytical category. This will be done from a historical institutionalism perspective.

Excursus: Gender and ethnic differentiation as interpretive cornerstones of the nation state

Like gender, ethnicity's legitimacy as a category of belonging and differentiation is not only a result of its naturalization in the »inventive« natural sciences (Schiebinger 1993, 2004; Tucker 1996). Its relevance also burgeoned against the backdrop of the emerging nation states in the nineteenth century as the new, primary institutional—that is: cognitive and interpretive—frame of conceiving the world in the transition to »modernity« (Müller 2012). Ethnic community formation—or *Vergemeinschaftung* as Max Weber denoted it—based on symbolic boundary making is a pivotal social mechanism of nation building up to now. In this regard, ethnicity and gender are two vital cultural frames of interpretation within which

European nations define and distinguish themselves from »the rest« of the world (Hall 1994). In postcolonial theory this pattern of binary differentiation of social objects has been described as a colonial episteme of difference based on an antithetical typification of social groups in terms of »we« and »the others« (Anzaldúa 1987).

Gender and ethnicity can be understood from the new historical institutionalism perspective as two central institutional pillars in the cognitive conceptualization of »the nation« that allow for an ongoing antithetical typification and boundary making in socio-historical processes. The idea of the nation embodies »shared cultural understandings (»shared cognitions,« »interpretive frames«) of the way the world works« (Thelen 1999, 386). This is differentiated by ethnicity and gender as the two central cognitive frames. They endure dramatic changes, for example, revolutions, social protest, and a change of institutional scripts. As Kathleen Thelen (ibid.) explains »specific organizations come and go, but emergent institutional forms will be »isomorphic« with (i.e. [...] similar in logic to) existing ones because political actors extract causal designations from the world around them and these cause-and-effect understandings inform their approaches to new problems.« Namely even when institutionally based rules are revised and a change of the institutional script is initiated, like in the case of *marriage for all* (for homo- and heterosexuals alike) which was established by law in Germany in 2017. As Thelen argues, new scripts are nevertheless »similar in logic to« the central cognitive pattern of the institutional core—here the binary gender code. *Marriage for all* seems to signify a paradigm shift at first glance—or in Thelen's terminology: it marks a change in the institutional script that seems to cut across the binary model's institutional core. But it is the strong emphasis on cognition in the new sociological institutionalism that explains why the binary pattern persists over time—despite the change of institutional scripts (Thelen 1999, 387). This is mirrored in the public sociopolitical conflicts about the institutional change in marriage law. The reason for institutional persistence is—according to Thelen—that the public conflicts do not undermine, but rather mirror the unabated relevance of central cognitive patterns of interpreting and understanding

the world. Accordingly, I argue that the conflicts confirm the basic cognitive status of gender—as the conflicts about asylum law in Germany confirm the basic cognitive status of ethnicity as a second central interpretive frame of the nation’s social coherence—in the logic of anti-genderists. How the relevance of gender as a cognitive, epistemic pillar of the nation can be traced to colonialism will be sketched in the following step.

Gender as the *white* interpretive frame of the nation

For a long time, colonialism has been understood as a purely male history of conquest (Dietrich 2007, 8). Women’s participation in colonialism was thus a marginal issue in academia until the 2000s; colonial mission has partly even been understood as an emancipatory project, for example in mission studies (Nyhagen Predelli and Miller 1999; Walgenbach 2005; Dietrich 2007, 16–17.). In gender sociology, the primary focus of interest was on women’s loss of political rights in the aftermath of the French Revolution as well as on the sexual division of labor, the question to what extent women were able to make up for modernization in the second half of the twentieth century and to realize equality on the labor market as well as at home.²⁴ As a result, the relevance of gender as a core element of »cultural imperialism« (Planert 2007, 197) in the colonial politics of the German Empire, and later in German fascism, had not been acknowledged for a long time. In this regard it has also been underestimated that women profited from *white* superiority in the colonies, and that they had actively participated in maintaining the *white* order, whether in the colonies or »at home.« Around 1900, »the women’s question« was a constitutive pillar of the national order (Planert 2000, 2005).

As part of the differentiation of industrial-capitalist societies, gender had experienced a cultural recoding (Honegger 1991), namely in the framework of nineteenth-century nation building. This was embedded in a literary and political discourse about »modernity« in Germany. It was

24 This interest unfolded into a huge research field; see, for example, Birgit Geissler and Mechthild Oechsle (1996, 1998).

characterized by strong cultural pessimism, described by Reinhard Koselleck (1959) as the pathogenesis of the bourgeois world. The cultural pessimism was directed toward the antinomies of societal development at large; this included the issue of national-cultural identity. Against the backdrop of the political revolutions and the massive socioeconomic changes, social transformation was fundamentally perceived as crisis. In this regard, no egalitarian, emancipatory vision of women's participation was developed, but the »binary gender philosophy« became a cornerstone in normative theories about the modernization of societies (Lichtblau 1996, 282).²⁵ The women's question was considered to be a cultural essential of the nationalist project (Lichtblau 1996, 281; Planert 2007, 193). This included women's responsibility not only for the biological reproduction of the nation, but also for its cultural and moral order. This nation-culture-gender nexus (Mae 2014) is mirrored in colonialism. The colonies functioned as a negative foil for the ideal of the *white*, bourgeois gender order in Europe (Mohanty 1988; Spivak 1988; Spivak 1990; Stoler 1995). Consequently, colonization was directed toward the control of *non-white* gender arrangements in the colonies (McClintock 1995). This included, for example, the enforcement of notions of orderliness in terms of domesticity and marriage as a central tool of colonial rule; the *white* gender order was a central facet of nationalist hegemony. Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff (2002) demonstrate, for example, how gender was implemented as a cognitive frame based on bourgeois ideas of sexuality, femininity, and domesticity in the south of Africa (today Botswana). They not only show how bourgeois gender ideals were enforced by means of physical and epistemic violence; they also demonstrate how the transformation of the social order in Europe was mobilized by notions held by social reformers who painted »Africa« as a wasteland without history or mores (Comaroff and Comaroff 2002, 251–52).

25 In contrast, the *Querelles des Femmes et des Sexes* that had developed in the fifteenth century were openly controversial about the question »what or how women and men are, ought to be, can be« (Bock 2000, 13; cf. Bock and Zimmermann 1997).

In this regard, the bourgeois, heteronormative gender regime functioned as a colonial interpretative frame; racialized bodies were denied the »normativities« addressed to and the »protections« granted to *white* women, for example in the case of sexual violence (Patil 2017, 144). In accordance with María Lugones (2007), Vrashuli Patil emphasizes that the gender system enforced by colonists was different from the *white* one. She denotes this as a dual gender framework according to which »only *bourgeois white* Europeans were gendered, and so civilized and fully human, while »the enslaved and colonized were judged as excessively sexual and improperly gendered« (Patil 2017, 144). The trope of *non-white* women's »sexual and bodily deviance« was a topic of wide discussions. In this way, the dual framework strongly contributed to the *white*, bourgeois (gender) order. It was effective in stylizing one's own image in contrast to »the other«; women in the German Empire, for example, constituted themselves as superior bourgeois subjects in the frame of the »colonial question« (Dietrich 2007, 17). Women viewed their national commitment, whether in the context of colonial societies or in the colonies, as an opportunity to save »the white German culture, the white masculinity and the white identity in the colonies« (Dietrich 2007, 247). All in all, women in the German Empire placed themselves in a hegemonic position, and gender was a fundamental element of the *white* interpretive frame of the nation within the binary social order. This episteme of gendered colonial difference continues until today, including in academia (Sousa Santos 2012; Mignolo 2007, 2012). This will be briefly outlined against the background of developments in gender research since the 1980s.

The continuity of colonial interpretation frames in gender research

In the 1990s, racism as well as other social differences and hierarchies among women started to come into the view of gender sociology. This was first inspired by the reception of feminist-colonial studies, with Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak leading the way. Second, the political, literary and academic movement of Black Feminism, including historians and sociologists such as Elsa Barkley Brown and Patricia Hill Collins, attained distinction in academic contexts (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 1996, 166–67). They criticize *white* women's focus

on patriarchal power as a commonly—that is, as a universally—shared experience of oppression and—as discussed above—that gender is mistakenly conceptualized as a homogenous category of inequality and difference. Kimberlé Crenshaw's notion of intersectionality (1991) seizes on the problem of multiple, intertwined forms of discrimination. The concept has been widely adopted in German sociology, but the relation between non-*white* and *white* women has only partly been reflected. As Mariá Lugones (2007, 203) states, *white* women »did not understand themselves in intersectional terms« and this means that they did not see themselves as involved in the intersection of race and gender. In the background is a very narrow concept of gender, as Lugones (2007, 202) explains, narrowed to the nineteenth-century image of »white bourgeois womanhood«:

feminism centered its struggle and its way of knowing and theorizing against a characterization of women as fragile, weak in both body and mind, secluded in the private, and sexually passive. But it did not bring to consciousness that those characteristics only constructed white bourgeois womanhood.

Overall, this construction of gender mirrors the situatedness of knowledge production in gender theory, that is its eurocentrism, and it hides its contribution to epistemic hegemony. This situation developed into a kind of paternalism among gender researchers in Germany, which was paralleled by paternalism in the women's movement, as Annita Kalpaka and Nora Räthzel (1985) state. The power imbalance in both the movement and gender research have mainly been named, criticized, and analyzed by women of color (Mamozai 1982; Hügel et al. 1993; Gümen 1996, 2001; Gutiérrez Rodríguez 1999; El-Tayeb 2001). As a result, the devaluation of non-*white* positions continued, also in academic knowledge production, accompanied by the epistemic reproduction of social hierarchies (Steyerl and Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2003; Castro Varela and Dhawan 2005), for example in the categorization of »the Third World Woman« as »a singular, monolithic subject« (Mohanty 1997, 255). The Bielefeld approach of the 1970s and 1980s is a paradigmatic example in this regard; Bielefeld's gender sociologists intended to develop a

feminist perspective on the global division of labor and consider global inequalities; but this approach also included a homogenous perspective on women, who were conceptualized »together with indigenous people and farmers on one level of oppression and exploitation of their (re)productive abilities within one worldwide economic system« (Giebler 2005, 47). In this perspective, the contribution of *white* women to global inequality and racism remains invisible.

Today, coloniality continues in the frame of global capitalism, first materially and second as the hegemonic power-knowledge nexus. Hypercapitalism is the new colonialism; it »imposes market domination [...] over diverse epistemologies around the world as if a superior and therefore legitimate authority. Underlying this domination is a reconceptualized and institutionalized matrix of racism, sexism and classism that has become invisible« (Canella and Manuelito 2008, 48). In this context, gender has not only been reinforced as a category of structural inequality across the globe (Walby 2009), it has also become a fundamental dimension of neo-imperial politics. This is mirrored, inter alia, by the global gender equality regime that has emerged from transnational feminist activism (Kardam 2004; Bernal and Grewal 2014; Carty and Mohanty 2015). Consequently, (migrant) women of color continually criticize the conceptualization of racism as a secondary type of discrimination in Germany (Gümen 1996), while indigenous feminisms in the Americas focus on the ongoing coexistence of imperialism, racism, and sexism (LaDuke 1999; Barker 2015). A first step toward a decolonialization of thinking is the insight that gender is a *white*, colonial knowledge category. The extent to which a global historical sociology approach is meaningful in this regard is the subject of the next section.

Decolonizing gender sociology: Why global historical sociology matters

The previous discussion demonstrates that gender sociology is biased. Gender is conceptualized as an analytical category whose primary explanatory power is derived from European transition processes in the industrial and political revolutions. That is, gender is conceptualized on the basis

of *white* women's social experiences in European nation states without conceptually considering their colonial legacies and the effects for the bourgeois gender order, for example, in the German case (Conrad 2008; Dietrich 2007). This is mirrored by the disciplinary formation of sociology in general: the differentiation of sociology is nurtured by the very existence of European modernity and resulted in sociology's self-conception as science of reflexivity, while Europe appears as both a starting point and as an endpoint of analysis. In this perspective, finally, also »the global is a consequence of ideas and practices« that originate in Europe (Bhambra 2014, 7); this *modus operandi* has, for example, been stabilized in approaches whose argument is based on Europe's exceptionalism that simultaneously signals its relevance for global history:

The »global,« insofar as it can be inferred from the writings of Marx and Weber, was the space in which processes initiated in Europe *came to play out as »world–historical.«* There was little discussion of how the global might be understood in terms of processes not directly identified as *capitalist* but nonetheless contributing to modernity (for example, colonial settlement, dispossession, enslavement and other forms of appropriation). (ibid.)

Postcolonial and decolonial approaches point to this hierarchy of knowledge and recognition (Bhambra 2014, 5). They indicate that knowledge formation—as in the case of sociological thinking—is imperial; and as an imperial knowledge institution, sociology became a key site of intellectual hegemony (Connell 2018). In a first step, postcolonial approaches demonstrated that the asymmetry results from the invisibility and subordination of colonialism in the conceptualization of modernity. This blind spot has been characterized by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007, 2014) as the sociology of absences (Seidmann 2013). Until today, colonialism and slavery are »not a major feature of sociological accounts« (Bhambra 2014, 9), or are either conceptualized as inferior, as in Max Weber's notion of adventure capitalism, which he used to characterize forms of capitalism other than the European standard of rational capitalism (Boatcă 2013). Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2012, 45) explains this as the failure of Western epistemologies to identify non-Western realities

and instead produce their non-existence, invisibility, or non-intelligibility—with particular effects for non-Westerners in terms of social and mental alienation.²⁶

Frantz Fanon was one of the first to denote the colonization of the mind as a central facet of colonization: »Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. [...] it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts it, disfigures and destroys it« (Fanon 1963, 210). In the same vein, ex-slave and abolitionist Sojourner Truth had already asked hundred years earlier, in 1851, »Ain't I a Woman?« in her famous speech in an US civil rights meeting and pointed that way at the hegemonic politics of knowledge production and racial inferiority (Gray White 2007). As Edward Said (1978) emphasized, hegemonic knowledge production includes representations that first and foremost mirror Western imagination, although they aim at describing the non-European world, like the term »the Orient.« In the notion of orientalism, Said characterizes the social construction of representations as a form of knowing and understanding the world based on a dualistic differentiation between »us« and »them, also characterized as othering²⁷ in postcolonial theory. Edward Said describes how this representation of reality shapes the social existence and outlook of othered persons, although they do not envision themselves in this reality. In other words, orientalism constructs others by locating them in their supposed otherness, thus producing the social reality of cultural difference and peculiarity.

26 According to Sousa Santos, this is not only an epistemological question, but an ontological one: »movements in different continents construct their struggles on the basis of ancestral, popular and spiritual knowledge that has always been alien to Eurocentric critical theory. Moreover, their ontological concepts of living and being are quite distinct from Western individualism« (Sousa Santos 2012, 50).

27 The term signifies the »process, by which the empire can define itself against those it colonizes, excludes and marginalizes. It locates its ›others‹ by the process in the pursuit of that power within which its own subjectivity is established« (Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin 2007, 173).

Decolonial thinking seeks to go a step further in order to move beyond colonial knowledge structures; this takes shape as an independent formation of critique, for example in Latin American subaltern studies (Quijano 2000, 2007; Mignolo 2007, 2012; Lugones 2007; Sousa Santos 2012; cf. also Samman 2012). At the center of criticism is the *coloniality of difference*; the term denotes the consequences of Western capitalist expansion, which was accompanied by the prevalence of European epistemologies and knowledge structures, for example in terms of social sciences, while knowledge emanating from non-Western contexts was erased with colonization. The *coloniality of power*, as Anibal Quijano (2000) named it, imposes a whole new social order on people, including worldviews, values, and expectations, for example in terms of gender (Lugones 2008). Additionally, the notion of *coloniality of difference* reveals the structural axis of inequality and renders the dichotomization of knowledge visible as epistemic violence. The *coloniality of difference* is reproduced in many ways: through the »re-construction and [...] restitution of silenced histories, repressed subjectivities, subalternized knowledges and languages« (Mignolo 2007, 451). According to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988, 1990) and Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2012), ignorance and lack of understanding are the result of ontological distance and the inability to identify non-Western reality.

For sociology, this means reconsidering its theorizing about European modernity itself, namely as an expression of the coloniality of power. As put in a nutshell in Sujata Patel's (2014, 2015) notion of colonial modernity or in Anibal Quijano's (2007) concept of modernity/coloniality, colonialism is the core of European modernity (Mignolo 2007): European modernity is intrinsically colonial and authoritarian (Bhambra 2014), including the gender order that is a central cognitive pattern of this repressive cognitive structure (Lugones 2008). According to Julian Go (2016, 8), this entails first recognizing sociology's imperial standpoint and second »transcend[ing] the very oppositions between Europe and the Rest, or the West and the East, which colonialism inscribed in our theories.« As Go explains, colonialism is not just another variable that has to be added to sociology's standard accounts, but the analytical task

is to transcend analytical bifurcation—as in the case of European nation states that have to be conceptualized as »empire-states: coercion wielding organizations governing expansive regions« (Go 2016, 15). It has to be taken into consideration that these nation states are structured by a hierarchy of political divisions and citizens/non-citizens, and by a specific gender regime. The bourgeois gender order is rooted in the ideology of nationalism, and as such it is a central facet of the episteme of colonial difference.

This indicates the need to reconceptualize gender sociology as well. Following Gurinder Bhambra, it is not enough to reconstruct the sociological understanding of social gender history in Europe as authoritarian. As Bhambra (2014, 142) argues, there is a need for an »alternative understanding of the emergence of the global within sociology«; accordingly, there is also a need for an alternative understanding of the emergence of gender within sociology—followed by a revision of the history of gender sociology. Bhambra’s approach aims at rethinking sociological thinking and societal histories as not only shared, but as inherently connected. She envisions *connected* social histories that result in *connected* sociologies beyond ideal types²⁸ as a possibility to overcome the social exclusion of exactly those parts of European history, namely colonialism, empire, and enslavement, »that constitute the conditions of [Europe’s] very possibility« (Bhambra 2014, 152)—instead of a perception that highlights societal history as national history in territorial boundaries. For gender sociology, this means rethinking societal gender histories as inherently connected beyond the ideal-typical portrayal of the capitalist, bourgeois gender order and heterosexism as the universal key explanation of gender, including contemporary societies. Vrashuli Patil urges us to realize that this is »a deeply ahistorical framework of analysis, as the heterosexual gender arrangements, capitalism, and racial classification are impossible to understand apart from each other« (2017, 144).

28 Bhambra (2014, 147) criticizes ideal types as necessarily selective; she argues that they usually function as evaluative and prescriptive matrices, as in the case of European modernity, whose narrative is based on exclusive narratives.

This also includes realizing that it is misleading to conceptualize gender against the background of European history only, »as if all women were white« (Lugones 2007, 202) and as if the relation to the gender regimes in the colonies were of secondary relevance. As María Lugones (2007, 186) argues, colonialism created a new gender system with two »very different arrangements for colonized males and females than for white bourgeois colonizers. Thus, it introduced many genders and gender itself as a colonial concept and mode of organization of relations, for example in the realm of production. The gender system constituted by colonial modernity is characterized by being permeated by race (and nation, as one might add) and by a persistent absence of gender analysis, as Lugones argues. But the colonial/modern gender system is based on »the classification of the population in terms of race« as »a necessary condition of its possibility« (Lugones 2007, 202). Thinking gender only in terms of dimorphism and the sexual division of labor would miss the point that race is deeply gendered and gender deeply raced, namely »in particularly differential ways for Europeans/white and colonized/nonwhite peoples« (ibid.). As a consequence, colonized women were characterized as categorically different from *white* women. Consequently, gender is a colonial category based on *white* superiority and the capitalist bourgeois gender order cannot be explained on its own terms. In this regard, global historical gender sociology can shed a different light on the parochialism of the gender notion.

Against this backdrop, the current anti-feminist debates are discernable as a result of racialized gender notions bound to nationalist »visions« of society, and as a reproduction of the colonality of gender, namely in contrast to non-*white* people whose sexuality is vilified and vulgarized (Winkel 2018b), while global inequalities are totally absent in these nation-oriented debates. When anti-genderists combat the change of the national order, they address its gendered constitution which they believe is in danger. As a consequence, non-*white* women (and men) are once more denigrated and signified as others. Thus, it is insufficient to discuss anti-genderism as an anti-feminist confrontation about the shifting of gender relations and equality standards within European societies only;

this furthers *white* perceptions of gender and causes the disappearance of its effects for racism and nationalism. The debates that anti-genderists pursue unfold in the national(ist) domain of *white* knowledge production. They are deeply racialized, and they mirror the understanding of gender as a *white*, colonial interpretive frame and its relevance for *white* European nations. Gender sociology can deepen its understanding of these processes with the support of a global, decolonially inspired sociology of gender approach.

Conclusion

This contribution started from the question to what extent a *global* historical sociology can enable gender sociology to decolonize its body of knowledge and to decode the continuing renationalization of gender as a colonial legacy in contemporary societies. This includes the interest in reflecting the extent to which gender sociology is built on a colonial body of *white* gender knowledge and how gender can be made visible as a colonial category of knowledge production. The discussion developed in an explorative way from the assumption that global historical sociology has played only a marginal role for gender sociology—up to now. The argument unfolded against the background of gender history's particular relevance for the understanding of the gendered organization of social life. I reflected on the secondary relevance of colonial histories in gender sociology in this regard, and assumed that this has caused a blind spot regarding gender sociology's own imperial standpoint and its enmeshment with colonial epistemic legacies in the system of scientific knowledge production as well as in the context of political feminism.

It becomes visible against this backdrop how gender sociology has developed as a *white* form of knowledge production that has nourished the coloniality of gender. While historical sociologists have started to go beyond national boundaries, and to shed light on entangled colonial histories, gender sociological research has not shared this interest in *connected* social histories in the same way. Instead gender has been conceptualized as an analytical category whose primary explanatory power is derived from transition processes in the industrial and the political

revolutions only. Accordingly, I introduced global historical sociology as a theoretical bridge toward a historical sociology of gender that considers the colonial legacy of the past as well as postcolonial realities in its theoretical model of the capitalist, bourgeois gender order more closely. This also includes the insight that *white* women were actively taking part in the production of a colonial body of gender knowledge that is effective until today. This is mirrored by the current anti-genderist debates that are not only anti-feminist but aim at reproducing gender as a core element of cultural imperialism both within Western, European societies and beyond. Accordingly, the capitalist, bourgeois gender order (that emerged in the frame of the nation-state and associates women with reproductive issues) is a paradigmatic facet of *white* knowledge production. I argued that a global historical sociology of gender that is inspired by post- and decolonial approaches will not only make the continuation of colonial epistemologies in present-day societies visible, but will make gender discernible as a colonial category of analysis.

Finally, I argued that considering post- and decolonizing perspectives in gender sociology contributes to a deeper understanding of how colonial structures of knowledge and meaning continue to proceed and reproduce power asymmetries until today. Decolonial thinking reveals how classifications in terms of race and nation are unfolding as a cornerstone of the bourgeois, heteronormative gender order and how this is fostering the coloniality of gender, namely as part of (re)nationalization processes throughout the twentieth century. As a consequence, anti-genderism affects *white* women and women of color alike, but anti-genderism »involves« *white* women in a different way, namely *against* women of color. Women should not allow themselves to be divided against each other.

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Prof. Dr. Heidemarie Winkel, Faculty of Sociology, Bielefeld University and Senior Research Associate, St. Edmund's College, Cambridge University: heidemarie.winkel@uni-bielefeld.de.