

CFP: Affect and Gender between Academia, Arts and Activism. Genealogies - Methodologies - Normativities, Berlin (31.12.2018)

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Call for Papers

Affect and Gender between Academia, Arts and Activism

Genealogies - Methodologies - Normativities

Symposium at Freie Universität Berlin, 9-10 May 2019

The establishment of gender as a major analytical category in the humanities and social sciences has enabled scholars to explore the construction of social norms and the sexual organisation of society in new and fruitful ways. In parallel, emotions, and more lately affect have emerged as categories to re-think social theory. Engaged in promoting an interdisciplinary dialogue, this symposium intends to connect research on gender and on affect so as to contribute to the on-going discussion on the following questions: What do studies of affect and emotion gain from a better understanding of gender dynamics? Conversely, what role do affective dynamics play in power constellations and gendered normative orders? How do histories of social movements and counter cultures inform contemporary ways of thinking and doing affect? What are the various methodological challenges at the intersection of gender and affect research? These ideas will be at the heart of three thematic panels, which aim to foster intensive discussions and collaborative thinking.

Genealogies

As the affective turn unfolds, issues concerning feeling, emotions, corporeality and materiality become more and more prominent. This can be understood as a welcome extension of social theory's traditional scope. However, with the broader reception of affect theory comes another shift of focus: Whereas critical attention to the affective dimension of the social was first and foremost developed as part of feminist and queer theory, evident in the influential work of Eve Sedgwick, Sara Ahmed or Lauren Berlant, the broader reception of the concept has often underplayed this political context or even rendered it invisible altogether. Counteracting such tendencies, our panel on *Genealogies* sets out to explore the diverse histories of affect, especially in the context of queer/feminist theory and practice: How can one trace this contested genealogy of affect? What are the relations between affect and these modes of critique? Can the political and aesthetical practices of 20th century social movements be brought into dialogue with new attention to affect?

Methodologies

Dealing with emotions, affect, and gender brings special methodological challenges to the fore. In particular, the openness of these dynamic concepts often brush against the strictly-defined theoretical orientations and empirical procedures homed in the social sciences. To prove otherwise, conceptual work, theory formation and research methods must be brought into close interaction. A new sensibility for emotions and affects offers the potential to undermine existing dualisms in addition to the challenges mentioned above. The panel *Methodologies* grapples with key contemporary questions on the implications for research undertaken from emotional-embodied perspectives, and explores the limitations and potentials of queer engagements with research techniques and methodologies. How can queer and/or marginalised perspectives be anchored in this pursuit? How are these affective and/or queer methods and methodologies testing the relationship between normative social sciences and queer or feminist studies?

Normativities

The gendered norms of emotion management and gender-specific modalities of affective expressions have been at the heart of ground-breaking studies in social theory. Their analytical lens allows for a better comprehension of the ways in which gender norms shape individual affective experiences and emotional lives. Yet, the reversed question, that is how the construction of gender norms is put to work through affect, has scarcely been discussed. The many heated debates concerning heteronormative social orders, the shaming of non-normative positions and the use of outrage as a tool in struggles for diverging gender politics provide vivid examples of both the stabilising and the transformative capacities of affect with regard to gender norms. How we can better understand this affective life of gender norms forms the key concern of the panel *Normativities*. In what way can affect be understood as a means of gender normalisation? What is the significance of the deeply entrenched normative dimensions of gender roles for affective experiences?

We welcome proposals that cross-examine and engage with these interdisciplinary questions. Participants from various fields, from social anthropology to theatre, literary studies to art practice, sociology to political science, are encouraged to apply. We welcome the use of innovative formats and encourage participants to develop interactive dialogues and collaborative reflections in their presentations. The symposium will be discussion-oriented and aims to establish a forum for debate in contemporary affect and gender theory. **Suggestions for presentations of approximately 20-minute should be assigned to one of the panels and sent via email to affect-and-gender@sfb1171.de by 31.12.2018 (250 words).** For participants without institutional support, limited subsidies for travel and accommodation will be available.

The symposium is organised by the Working Group *Affect & Gender* of the Collaborative Research Centre *Affective Societies. Dynamics of Coexistence in Mobile Worlds* (SFB 1171)

at Freie Universität Berlin. Its members come from theatre studies, literary studies, social anthropology and sociology. The project is funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG).

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