ABSTRACT

GENDER, POWER AND LEADERSHIP: PERSPECTIVES FROM FIGURATIONAL SOCIOLOGY

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Do men behave like primitive barbarians in business life and do women have the burden of civilising them? What changes took place in recent years and what remains the same? Although one can observe an increasing rate only 9 to 11% of professors in Germany are female. Only 6% of leading-positions are held by women world-wide. 56% of men think that children suffer as a result of their mother’s career; 34% of men would give up their own career in favour of that of their wife’s. How would one start to explain this with respect to the differences in European societies? Scientific researches proof that women nowadays are highly qualified but nevertheless are under-represented in leadership posts. Being constructed as basically different to men and as outsiders women are a relatively new phenomenon in this extraordinary sphere of work life. Long-term figurational studies help to understand the persistence of women’s under-representation that is embedded in the complex movement of ascending and descending groups. From the eighteenth century up to the present day one can observe in an impressive way how far the behavioural codes in the work-life are gendered. They express the socially constructed tension between (male) professionalism, authority and leadership on the one hand and femininity on the other hand. With a few of typical examples from the empirical data the research paper lines out this ambivalent development, trying to understand nowadays problems of Gender Equality.