

# THE FORGOTTEN CONTROVERSY: EVIDENCE FOR A WORLD OF ALTERNATIVE VALUES

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## Abstract:

*The paper discuss the forgotten controversy from the history of sociological theory between two eminent sociologists, Marianne Weber and Georg Simmel, about the position of women in German society (and educational system) in early 20th century. The authors offer new interpretation of the controversy embeded into societal context of: (a) German society in late 19th and early 20th century, (b) first wave feminisim in Germany, and (c) individual habitus of its protagonists. The interpretation shows that inspite of the fact that Weber and Simmel confront their opinions about Simmel's hypothesis that women should create a different, independent and alternative cultural system (subjective culture) as a counterpoint to dominant male objective culture, they both made an attempt to conteptualize reality that will be constructed on alternative value systems. However, these alter realities were limited by the academic, educational and political experiences of their creators, as well as their gender and class belonging.*

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**Key words:** education, Germany, early 20th century, the first wave feminism, Marianne Weber, Georg Simmel, women in science, history of sociological theory, sociology of education

Since our lives are determined by particular configurations of the constructed symbolic, political and social realities that are embedded in concrete “discursive constructions and systems of classifications“ (Glover and Kaplan 2000, 160), it is questionable to which extent these configurations could be changed at a particular historical moment or even (re)imagined in a different manner. These structural configurations, which refer to the oppressive and/or encouraging influence of certain social structures, trace the trajectories of our (individual and collective) lives and their multiple realities (Šic 1998). The cumulative effect of these trajectories and their particular features chart the coordinates of a specific “grid of control” (Haraway 2002) which is “vested in the constitutive principles, codes, and especially the commonsense consciousness and practices underlying our lives” (Apple 1991, 4) – the cultural hegemony that “saturates” our very consciousness and “the only world” (Apple 1991, 5). The hegemony organizes an “assemblage of meanings and practices, the central, effective and dominant system of meanings, values and actions which are lived” (Apple 1991) within different subsystems such as educational, economic and social ones.

Any form of disobedience or resistance to the existing structural configuration could be interpreted as an “evidence for a world of alternative values and practices whose existence gives the lie to hegemonic constructions of social world“ (Scott 1991, 776). In this paper we will try to reinterpret a professional controversy from the history of sociology, between two sociologists, scholars and colleagues, who dared to reimagine these hegemonic discursive constructions about the (present and future) societal position of

women within society, academia and referent gender regimes. Both of them thought from their own (gender and class) identity positions that limited the potential reach of their scientific imagination. However, this controversy between Marianne Weber and Georg Simmel, both extremely talented social theorists, about the reorganization of the existing gender regimes in Germany in the early twentieth century, offers us a colourful insight into the status of women in academia and former Weimar society.

## SETTING THE SCENE: GERMAN SOCIETAL CONTEXT

The period of Bismarck's rule in Germany was marked by numerous political and social changes. In this period, Germany had several great military victories (in 1866 and 1870) followed by a comprehensive social transformation of various segments of society. This transformation led to the economic improvement, progressive social reforms, particularly in the field of health services and pension funds, but also to the internal political consolidation which enabled Germany to conduct fast industrialization and modernization (Jovanović Ajzenhamer 2019a, 120–125). The improved living conditions brought German society into a period of demographic advancement, the growth of the middle class and urban population. Numerous traditional behaviour patterns were also influenced by these transformation processes. For instance, the practice of arranging marriages became less frequent and the young started to choose their spouses on their own, while higher classes used various birth control methods (Evans 1976; Nipperdey and Nolan 1999).

However, parallel to these “emancipation” processes related to the largest number of citizens, happening the process of strengthening the *milita-*

*ristic culture* supported by Bismarck's military successes and reinforcing the potential of the German army. According to certain historians, this masculine militaristic culture became a strong generator of German nationalism. Although political and social circumstances changed when young kaiser Wilhelm II came to the throne, the militaristic culture remained constant of the German cultural context. Although Wilhelm II during his reign emphasized a new expansionist model of militarism, it was considerably based on the ideals of the old (Bismarck's) Prussian militarism so this transition did not lead to any greater tensions (Hull 2004, 240; Wette 2008, 101–115; Evans 1976, 5; Jovanović Ajzenhamer 2019a, 120–125). Without analyzing thoroughly the differences between the Junker and imperialistic military *ethos*, it can be concluded that the period up to the Weimar Republic was marked with the value system characterized by the militaristic culture with a distinct gender connotation.

This specific quality of the German social context determined a slightly delayed dynamics of the development of the struggle for gender equality during the first wave of feminism, compared to other countries (see more in: Young 1999; Mazón 2003; Guido 2010; Evans 1976). At this point of time, the feminist movement in Germany had a somewhat different path and different aims from the ones advocated by the feminist activists in Great Britain, the USA or France. Following the unification of Germany, the militaristic culture resulted in a political outcome called by political scientist Brigitte Young the “Triumph of the Fatherland” (Young 1999). She claims that at the time women were completely marginalized, which was particularly evident in the sphere of education (Mazón 2003; Guido 2010; Evans 1976).

The first association for women's rights in Germany was established in 1865 (*Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein* [*General German Women's Association*]), while in 1894 feminists gathered around *Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine* (*Federation of German Women's Associations*, hereinafter BDF). BDF was the largest feminist association until the Nazis came to power. BDF pub-

lished one of the most read magazines at the time – *Die Frau*. The specific characteristic of this association was that its activities were directed at improving the position of women from middle and higher social classes. It was a bourgeois association of liberal provenience which advocated the equality in the field of education and political activism. BDF was not interested in working class women, who struggled for their rights within the socialist movement (Mazón 2003, Guido 2010; Evans 1976). There was an interesting underlying idea of cultural feminism (see more in: Evans 1976), promoted by the BDF activists. It stated that cultural identities of men and women differed qualitatively, but that this fact should not decrease women's chances regarding education and work.

Education was unavailable for most women. Only the women who belonged to privileged social classes had the right to get an education. Even these women (in most cases) ended their school adventure at the age of 16, since university doors were mainly closed for women. Only the girls from the highest class could study under specific conditions. In German homes, schools and companies, the situation was clearly defined: men's task was to fight, think, educate themselves and create, while women realized their creative and intellectual capacities through caring about the household and children and providing emotional support to their husbands. Although these patriarchal patterns were also dominant in other countries, the militaristic culture in Germany supported and strengthened the patriarchal value system and the gender order based on these values more steadily than in other countries (Evans 1976, 22).

The continuous feminist pressure related to opening the educational system for women, as well as some sporadic attempts to reform the system<sup>2</sup>, led to a comprehensive reform of education in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As cultural feminists had advocated for a long time, this reform includ-

2 For example, in the period from the late 19th century to the First World War, there were several attempts to change the curricula of secondary schools attended by girls. During the 1980s there were various private initiatives of strengthening the girls in education by organizing additional classes for them.

ed a better preparation for girls wanting to complete schooling. Additional classes of mathematics and science were introduced, thus creating slightly more adequate conditions for the girls who wanted to study (Albisetti 1985, 16–18).

Until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Zurich was almost the only place where German women could obtain a university education. Russian and Jewish women enrolled in the universities in Switzerland, and until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century this involved women from all parts of Germany (Mazón 2003, 61), since women were regularly deprived of this possibility at German universities. When BDF was founded, it had two basic aims: to provide higher education to a larger number of women and allow women to work in the field of medicine (Evans 1976, 26). Although there was a great resistance to the reform of higher education, the situation started to change at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: “An official survey of professors in 1892 revealed a widespread opposition to allowing women to enter the universities. Bosse deferred to this sentiment when he denied the first Abiturientinnen the right to matriculate, allowing even those who wanted to become physicians only to audit courses with the permission of individual professors. As the number of Abiturientinnen and other female auditors increased, however, attitudes appear to have changed rather rapidly: an unofficial poll in 1897 showed a much higher percentage of professors open to the idea of women students, although many suggested that these might be best served in a separate women’s university“ (Albisetti 1985, 20).

The end of the First World War, military defeats and abdication of Emperor Wilhelm II opened a new chapter in the social and cultural life in Germany. In the Weimar Republic (1918 – 1933), the position of women was considerably different. An increasing number of female students enrolled at universities without restrictions (even technical faculties started accepting girls). The continuation of the fight for women’s rights in the Weimar Republic was characterized by suffragettes’ activities and their political demands

related to granting women the right to vote. Although the interwar period was politically rather confusing since two different political and ideological currents were present in Germany, this confusion did not affect the female movement. During this period, the feminist movement had clear political aims and was unambiguously becoming stronger. Nevertheless, although there was a clear consensus regarding specific political aims (such as granting women the right to vote) inside the movement, some ideological conflicts were inevitable. Within the movement itself, there was a strict division between bourgeois and left-wing feminists which soon led to the proliferation of the movement. Thus, this period is characterized by the parallel activity of Marxist and pro-religious associations, as well as the strongest bourgeois and liberally oriented BDF (see more in: Evans 1976). The strength of these associations can be also seen in the fact that when Hitler came to power in 1933, he suspended all the activities of BDF (and numerous other women's organizations).

## **MARIANNE WEBER: LIFE BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE**

Marianne Weber was one of the most productive and renowned female academicians in Germany in the period from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the 1950s. However, she is primarily and unfairly remembered as “the wife of Max Weber” in the history of social thought. Behind this rather degrading identifier for a scientist, lies a rich scientific and political experience, as well as enviable research work. It involves the studies from the field of classical philosophy (where she studied the heritage of Fichte and Marxism), and studies on the position of women in Germany at the time, in addition to the dedicated systematization of her late husband's texts – how the histories of social thought remember her now. Marianne Weber's efforts are

extremely significant for the researchers of Max Weber's legacy, since only owing to her great work there is a systematized and coherently integrated legacy of Max Weber. This would never have happened if she had not been an extremely talented philosopher who managed to conserve in a plausible manner the most significant research findings of her husband, as well as to interpret them.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, her (a) autonomous research, mainly directed at gender issues, (b) travel notes<sup>4</sup> (Offe, 2005), diaries and interviews (Becker 1951) which complete the contextual and theoretical puzzle of her rich scientific work, as well as (c) intensive political activity, both in the feminist movement and in the National Assembly sat in the Reichstag during the Republic, were all almost forgotten and quite unfairly moved to the margins of sociological research of the discipline's history. In this manner, this author's prolific work was forgotten due to the structural configuration of the particular historical moment. Marianne Weber published her first book in 1900 and continued to publish various studies until her death<sup>5</sup>.

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3 When Max Weber died, he had a large number of unpublished texts which were the result of his project *The Fundamentals of Social Economics*. Desiring to prepare her husband's *magnum opus*, Weber published three editions of *Economy and Sociology* with the help of several colleagues. The three volumes of *Economy and Sociology* were supposed to show the intellectual magnificence, devotion in research and scholarly performance of Max Weber. Later, the researchers of Weber's legacy considered this Marianne Weber's move to be a fatal error (because she integrated the writings that Weber had not planned to publish as a unique whole). However, it is questionable whether Weber's sociology would be so influential and significant if there were no *Economy and Sociology* in such an imposing and comprehensive format. See more in: Tenbruck 1980, 316; Mommsen 2000, 365; Molnar 2014, 15–16; Jovanović Ajzenhamer 2019a, 117–119).

4 Her important insights into American society can be seen in her sketches written during the St. Louis Congress in 1904 [Offe 2005]

5 Some of the most famous works signed by her are: *Fichtes Sozialismus und sein Verhältnis zur Marschen Doktrin* (*Fichte's Socialism and its Relation to Marxist Doctrine*), *Beruf und Ehe* (*Occupation and Marriage*), *Ehefrau und Mutter in der Rechtsentwicklung* (*Wife and Mother in the Development of Law*), *Die Frage nach der Scheidung* (*The Question of Divorce*), *Autorität und Autonomie in der Ehe* (*Authority and Autonomy in Marriage*). She also wrote the biography of Max Weber (*Max Weber: Ein Lebensbild* [*Max Weber: A Biography*]), memoirs, interviews and various other texts (see more in: Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley 1998).

Marianne Weber became interested very early in the struggle for the improvement of the position of women. During her first university term at the University of Heidelberg, she founded the group *Studies for Women, Education for Women*. Within this Group, she stood up for the possibility of girls to get an education under the same conditions as their male colleagues (Hajns 2011, 26). However, based on her later work, her female contemporaries defined her as a conservative feminist.<sup>6</sup> Despite the disagreements with part of the feminist movement, Weber remained devoted to the project of encouraging women to step out of the private sphere. She was a very influential person in the history of struggle for women's rights in the Second Reich, primarily in the Weimar Republic. She was extremely politically active – as a member of the Democratic Party and the only woman in the National Assembly sat in the Reichstag during the Republic, a counsellor in the Ministry of the Interior, president of the League of German Women's Associations (Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine). Her social reputation grew over years and after the First World War she became one of the major actors on the political and scientific stage (Evans 1976, 243). When Hitler dissolved the League of German Women's Associations, Weber retreated from the public eye into the limited publicity of her own house, and sporadically published papers such as *Frauen und Liebe* (Women and Love) and *Erfülltes Leben* (The Fulfilled Life).

The professional life of Marianne Weber and its later reception by historians of science provides a vivid image of a woman's experience in the higher education and academia in the Second Reich and the Weimar Republic, as well as after the Second World War. Although she belonged to a higher class by origin, and thus had the opportunity to get an education and participate actively in the academic and political community, herstory tells about the structural limitations which women and female scientists faced despite the fact that they belonged to the privileged social classes. The biography

<sup>6</sup> For this reason socialist activist Anna Pappritz refused to review her study on marriage (*Beruf und Ehe* [Occupation and Marriage]), believing that it was an insufficiently radical paper.

of Marianne Weber is an evidence of a world of alternative female experiences at German universities, society and the achievements which could be reached within this social framework by a woman, despite her being socially privileged, talented and professionally competent.

## **GEORG SIMMEL: INFLUENCER FROM THE MARGIN**

Georg Simmel, one of the first German sociologists, left a hyper-production of papers covering a wide range of research topics. During his lifetime, although supported by eminent older university colleagues<sup>7</sup> and highly popular as a lecturer (not only at the university but also within the circle of Berlin's intellectual elite), he never received a salaried position within the university in Berlin. In that sense, it could be said that he occupied an ambiguous position, at the same time marginal from the point of view of academic standing and central within the intellectual milieu. There are many reasons that contributed to such reception of his work. One of the most important is undoubtedly the apparent eclecticism of his work — ranging from historiography through psychology and sociology to aesthetics. Simmel's "imaginative, bold and exploratory journeys back and forth across the borders of sociology, philosophy and aesthetics, together with his reflections on culture", actually are the things that "contributed ... to his lack of recognition in the academic world" (Watier 1998, 71). However, it could be said that for Georg Simmel, more than for any other classical sociologist, "the quest for individuality is the central problem of the modern world" (Phillips 1990, 259). Based on these thoughts, Simmel's research focus included the issue of the relationship between men and women (Kozer 2008). In the period from 1890 and 1911, Simmel wrote a series of essays regard-

ing this issue, placing them in the context of modernization and increasing professional specialization which characterized the German economy of the time (van Vucht Tijssen 1991, 203). These essays initiated an interesting controversy between the two contemporaries.

## THE CONTROVERSY

The main idea, which started the controversy, stated by Simmel in his papers is philosophical and claims that there are substantial differences between *objective* and *subjective culture*.<sup>8</sup> According to Simmel, these two spheres are autonomous, but not hierarchical. *Objective culture* represents the final process of transposing a specific value system and different social elements into the final systemic emanations such as, for example, industry, science, art, commerce, religion, etc. Simmel differentiates religiosity (as the process of “transforming” non-religious elements into the religious content) from religion (as a complete religious system involving a certain dogma, myths, practices, beliefs and ethics). Similarly, in the case of creating objective culture, Simmel insists on processuality, as well as on the fact that social structures we recognize as an integral part of modern life have their etymological basis outside the phenomenal and present-time world (see more in: Jovanović Ajzenhamer 2019b).

We are not going to discuss the ontological and epistemological status of the concepts used by Simmel<sup>9</sup> but we are going to consider the claim that objective culture is exclusively male culture. Men created religion, science and industry so the success in these spheres is perceived as exclusively

8 It should be taken into account that objective and subjective culture are represented as *forms* of culture. We will not deal with the characteristics of formalism applied by Georg Simmel in his papers, but this theoretical and methodological note should be kept in mind when interpreting his hypotheses.

9 See more in: van Vucht Tijssen 1991; Witz 2001; Wobbe, 1999.

“men’s matter”. This state of affairs is socially normalized to a degree that even if a woman achieves success in a public job, people usually say that “she did it in a men’s way”, Simmel reminds us (Zimel 2008, 293).

However, Simmel states that the problem is in the fact that objective culture is represented as the only valid and relevant axiological system. An even larger problem lies in representing objective culture as a “universal human creation” and therefore perceiving it as gender neutral, which is not the case, as shown in the previous analysis. Simmel claims that it is a great delusion. In other words, he believes that female action potential and performance in different spheres (such as art, education or science) is estimated by means of objective culture standards, which means that women are *a priori* defeated by their male rivals. Since women did not participate in creating objective culture, this culture could not include “female principles and qualities” (Zimel 2008, 304), and therefore women could not fulfil the criteria established as ultimate arbiters of success in the modern world. What is more, Simmel believes that the language used by objective culture is suited to men. Since women were not used to employing this linguistic repertoire, they were not able to reach the highest (or at least equal) positions in different segments of objective culture (Zimel 2008, 300).

Simmel strives to correct this injustice by introducing a new system – *subjective culture* – into the pantheon of previously created cultural systems. In other words, he states that there should be a field created by means of the female manner of action, thinking, speech and creativity. He believes that the idea of value neutrality in society should be abandoned since there is no neutrality but only the male perspective which estimates the female position as morally less valuable. In order to overcome this view of culture and society, *radical dualism* is needed: “Only if the female existence as such is acknowledged as having a basis fundamentally different from the male and a stream of life having a fundamentally different direction from the male – two existential tonalities, each constructed according to the autonomous formu-

la, could the naive conflation of male values with values as such be avoided” (Zimel 2008, 302). *Ergo*, Simmel invites women to use their potential for original creation and to participate in introducing an alternative system of standards which will help them discharge the ballast of male standards used for estimating their own success. According to Simmel, women should realize their capacities by adding a specific *female* quality in various social practices. The point is not for a female physician to treat people in the same manner as a male physician, but the aim is for a female physician to understand that she can enrich the medical culture in a quality manner unavailable for male physicians. Simmel believes that a female physician should apply different practices and offer different approaches which will enable a *de facto* female manner of treating male and female patients (Zimel 2008, 304–305).

*Summa summarum*, Simmel does not plead for the equality of men and women within the general form of objective culture, but for the equality of “two types of existence of completely different rhythm” which would enable “women to possess a *world* of their own, which is from its very fundamentals incomparable with the male world” (Zimel 2008, 326). In the language of social reality, the formation of an autonomous and slightly marginalized (but not less valuable) female cultural system will enable the balance of gender and class differences which determined professional and private destinies of women in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Germany. Simmel points at the fact that in the current state of affairs only the women from the wealthiest families and those with the best talents manage to succeed within the male objective culture, while the position of women from lower classes is increasingly poor. Due to the shifting of the production process outside the household, a smaller number of children and lower marriage rates, women are forced to enter the labour market and do the lowest paid jobs. Since women are not allowed to have a good education, they cannot compete with their male rivals at the labour market and thus remain trapped in the unfavourable social position. Thus, “the activity layer of female secondary originality becomes increasingly...closed and they are offered the alternatives of very high and very low

professions” (Zimel 2008, 323). Therefore, Simmel’s hypotheses regarding the difference between objective and subjective culture were not merely in the range of his theoretical and philosophical programme, but their aim was to offer the guideline for radical social changes within the social context of rapid industrialization and modernization of the Second Reich.

Marianne Weber reacted sharply to Simmel’s essay on the relationship between objective and subjective culture, or male and female culture. Not only did she criticize his text, but she also offered her own opinion on the transformation of gender regimes in the existing modernization processes. This debate between the colleagues occurred in a specific context of the development of German feminism<sup>10</sup> at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In his text, Simmel directly engaged in a controversy with feminists, while Weber participated in various activities related to this movement. It is of utmost importance to understand the imaginative ranges, as well as the potential subversive capital of this dispute and the individual positions of the actors.

Marianne Weber responded promptly to Simmel’s text criticizing almost all postulates on which his theory of gender relations is based. However, Weber acknowledged that Simmel made great progress when compared to his philosophical inspirers<sup>11</sup>, but she maintained her position that Simmel’s theory on the difference between male and female nature, and objective and subjective culture had the essentially normative character and as such had no great heuristic cognitive value (Weber 1919, 97–100).

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<sup>10</sup> The first wave of feminism in Germany had considerably different characteristics from the situation in Great Britain or the USA. The main idea of *cultural feminism*, as the movement was frequently called in Germany (Evans 1976), was that there were essential differences between men and women which required the distribution of jobs. However, this did not mean that women’s work should be solely related to the private domain, but it meant that women should be allowed to use their sensibility and nature (different from the male one) to contribute to the improvement of the public and particularly political sphere.

<sup>11</sup> Such as Kant or Shopenhauer who believed that the capacity of the female intellect was on the level of a child’s intellect.

Weber rejects the idea that objective culture is essentially male culture and believes that such an attitude is a screen and legitimate tool for excluding women from the public sphere. The fact that, throughout history, men did really create objective culture does not mean that there are differences between men and women at the ontological level, or that both genders cannot contribute to the modern objective culture. On the contrary, Weber believes that only when men and women are able to act together in objective culture will they have the opportunity to realize their full creative capacities and contribute to the common good of the society they live in (Weber 1919, 97–100). Weber leads the polemics at the strictly philosophical level, but she also reduces her arguments to the lower levels of generality and indicates that Simmel mixed up the levels of analysis: she notices that the historical and empirical reality encompasses a different arsenal of arguments for discussion in comparison to the debate about the ontological status of men and women. If Weber and Simmel can agree with each other at this first level of debate (regarding the fact that objective culture was actually created by men), they completely disagree at the second level of controversy. Weber uses contemporary terms to negate essentialism and finds that talking about the difference between women and men is completely unacceptable in terms of qualitative differences between their intellectual performances.

She acknowledges a great contribution of Simmel in stopping the “vicious circle” of perceiving women as a specific negation of men (van Vucht Tijssen 1991, 213), and emphasizes that he underlined “the detestable banality of naming women a prettier gender” (Zimel 2008, 314). However, Weber’s recognition of the step forward in Simmel’s approach (in comparison to the earlier philosophical classics) does not annul the deep gap between their positions. Weber rejects the idea on the existence of any metaphysical or moral differences between the genders and does not accept the idea stating that women should not participate in objective culture. If subjective culture is reserved for women and objective culture is available to men, Weber wonders what happens to women who achieve success in objective culture.

Do they belong to a third gender – women having male characteristics? She finds that the idea of removing women from the domain of objective culture is absurd and concludes that the division between objective and subjective culture only contributes to the rigidity of the existing differences within the patriarchally conditioned gender regime (van Vucht Tijssen 1991, 209).

In her essay (*Die Frau und die objektive Kultur* [Weber 1919]), Weber makes a step forward from the pure criticism of Simmel's theoretical position and offers another set of arguments stating why women and men should be ontologically equalized (Witz 2001, 356). She believes that the moral alignment of genders is the only manner for reaching the full range of emancipation and modernization. Similarly to her earlier work, Weber insists in this text on the decentralization of traditionally understood gender roles, and emphasizes that men should be encouraged to participate in household jobs while even enjoying them! She states that men have the capacity and responsibility to engage in part of household chores, and that all channels towards the public sphere should be open for women, primarily in terms of the equal availability of education (van Vucht Tijssen 1991, 210).

Since she was interested in the happenings at universities and in the academic community, Weber dedicated part of her essay to this issue. She concludes that there are as many hidden geniuses among women as among men, but that women do not have the possibility to express themselves because they are “overloaded” by housework. The German academic context was rather conservative and women had very narrow possibilities of getting a higher education (and almost no chances of pursuing the career of professors). However, in this essay Weber does not write about legal obstacles but about the fact that even if women were formally allowed to gain academic positions, they would not be able to realize this since they were overwhelmed by housework. In other words, women have the same ambitions and predispositions for success in science as their male colleagues, but the social structure restrains them from succeeding (Weber 1919, 129). The road to-

wards women's emancipation is not only burdened by the criteria tailored for others, but it is additionally characterized by the demands of the social and family contexts which prevent women from dedicating themselves to their personal improvement. Weber believes that when it comes to women this road should not be qualitatively different from the road taken by their male colleagues. On the contrary, it should be wide enough to provide space for both men and women to walk together, as equal collaborators and colleagues.

## CONCLUSION

This controversy, which was ahead of its time in many ways, highlights several important issues:

- (a) Political expectations from the *feminist movement*. In Germany, the legal recognition of women's rights came more slowly than in some other countries, such as England, France, the United States, or Canada. For example, the equal rights of parents under German law did not arrive until the German Federal Republic in the 20th century; the German Civil Code introduced in 1900 had left the law unaltered in the matter, basing it precisely on the General state laws for the Prussian states of 1794. Property rights were also slow to change. During the late 19th century, married women still had no property rights, requiring a male guardian to administer property on their behalf (exceptions were made only in cases involving imprisoned or absent husbands). Any woman who had inherited an artisan business had some freedom in practice to run the business, but she was not permitted to attend guild meetings, and had to send a male to represent her interests. Tradition dictated that «the state

recognizes a burgher but not a burgess”. On the other hand, the accelerated processes of modernization and professional specialization characterizing the German economic development at the time of this controversy additionally emphasized the tension between the need for female emancipation and professionalization and the legal framework which did not accompany the social development. Because of this particular paradox the expectations from the growing feminist movement were rather high in particular social circles that both Weber and Simmel belonged to. This is the reason why they both criticized the feminist movement in Germany, but having different motives and from different theoretical perspectives.

- (b) Their different theoretical lenses are shaped by a specific grid of *intersectionality* (Crenshaw, 1991) that frames their particular identity positions, especially those related to gender and class belonging. Belonging to the privileged male gender group, Simmel does not relinquish the benefits gained by this position and believes that it is wrong to require women’s participation in objective culture. Simmel perceives the solution to this state of structural inequality, possibilities and chances in forming a radically new, different and autonomous female activity sphere (subjective culture). Weber reacts sharply, perceiving things from her own gender perspective of someone whose many rights and possibilities are restricted only because she is a woman. She states that women and men should be equal in every respect – from the initial chances for education and work, to the criteria for measuring the performance and contribution in different professions. Marianne Weber understands that opening of a new, exclusively female space of subjective culture does not help to overcome the existing structural configuration of unequal distribution of potentials and power. Striving to overcome this gender binary perspective on social reality and morality, she insists on the basic principles of human nature and universal human ontology. It follows, she claims, that if they want to realize the full potential of their being,

both women and men should be offered a possibility to show different characteristics of their personality – those related to emotions, care and creativity and those related to rationality, spirituality and political action potential (Weber 1919, 119). On the other hand, Simmel points at the limitations of Weber which result from her blurred perspective owing to her class position. He criticizes Weber's view of the women's struggle because it narrows the range of this struggle to the activities of higher classes (to which she belongs herself) at the actual level. In other words, it enables the women belonging to bourgeoisie to fight for their rights, while the women belonging to lower classes remain deprived and in an increasingly unfavourable position (in comparison to the pre-modern times when, according to Simmel, their qualities were evaluated in a different way [Zimel 2008, 323]). Interestingly, in his essay Simmel anticipates the criticism of Marianne Weber and provides answers to several of her objections. For example, his description of wealthy girls who have the opportunity to get an education and succeed in objective culture perfectly reflects the biography of Marianne Weber. She does not provide a specific answer to the question "What about the women from the underprivileged classes?" Even when she says that women should be more present at universities, she does not emphasize their social class differences.

- (c) In social science as well as in the humanities, it has become common to distinguish between essentialist and constructivist understandings of group identities. Although Weber and Simmel do not name their positions as *essentialist* or *constructivist*, they both frame their arguments within one or another approach. In his theory, Simmel makes a compromise with the patriarchy by shifting the field of the struggle for women's rights into subjective culture. While doing so, he accepts the patriarchal essentialist hypothesis about the 'natural' difference between sexes but without imposes the social hierarchy among them. Thus, he believes that the only way to leave the existing asymmetry

of possibilities and power is the creation of the exclusively female field of subjective culture. Weber understandably highlights the normative character of Simmel's theory and its limitations for women. Although their debate is primarily philosophical and deals with the ontological, ethical and even metaphysical dimensions (Witz 2001, 363), the consequences of their different approaches are essentially social. On the other hand, Weber keeps insisting on the universality of human experience and advocates equal possibilities for women and men for realizing different individual experiences through which they construct themselves as social beings, including the experiences related to education.

Although they have different starting positions for constructing their own theoretical thoughts, both Weber and Simmel strive to construct alternative values that could endanger deeply unjust hegemonic construction of social world. Within the limits of their own identity positions, both of them searched for social forms which could overcome the shortcomings of the society they lived in. This forgotten controversy between the two thinkers who shared numerous views represents a significant "evidence for a world of alternative values and practices whose existence gives the lie to hegemonic constructions of social world" (Scott, 1991).

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## O JEDNOJ ZABORAVLJENOJ POLEMICI: DOKAZI O SVETOVIMA ALTERNATIVNIH VREDNOSTI

### Rezime:

Rad nastoji da promisli jednu zaboravljenu polemiku iz istorije sociološke teorije između dvoje uglednih sociologa, Marijane Veber i Georga Zimela, o položaju žena u nemačkom društvu (i obrazovnom sistemu) početkom 20. veka. Autorke u tekstu nude novu interpretaciju ove polemike koju situiraju u društveni kontekst: (a) nemačkog društva krajem 19. i početkom 20. veka, (b) prvog talasa feminizma u Nemačkoj, i (c) individualnih habitusa glavnih protagonista ove polemike. Interpretacija pokazuje da, uprkos činjenici da se Veber suprotstavlja Zimelovoj hipotezi da bi žene trebalo da stvore drugačiji, nezavisan i alternativan kulturni sistem (subjektivnu kulturu) kao protivtežu dominantnoj muškoj objektivnoj kulturi, oboje pokušavaju da konceptualizuju stvarnost koja bi bila konstruisana na alternativnim sistemima vrednosti. Međutim, ovi konstrukti zamiš-

ljenih alternativnih stvarnosti bili su ograničeni akademskim, obrazovnim i političkim iskustvima njihovih tvoraca, kao i njihovom rodnom i klasnom pripadnošću.

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***Ključne reči:*** obrazovanje, Nemačka, početak 20. veka, feminizam prvog talasa, Marijana Veber, Georg Zimmel, žene u nauci, istorija sociološke teorije, sociologija obrazovanja

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