

A Feminist View of Women and the Family in Germany of Today

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A review of women's present-day situation in the former German Democratic Republic after the reunification was followed by a selected presentation of West-German feminist theory and research on the family:

1. When a feminist perspective is applied to marriage and partnership in Germany (as well as in other countries) it becomes evident that a women's role is to sacrifice herself out of "love" for the benefit of her male partner and their children. On the level of the society this means that women's unpaid labor for her husband and her children is the basis of our social and economic system.
2. Prior to feminist research sexual violence in the family had not been an issue of public or scientific concern. Disclosing the prevalence of sexual violence even in well-to-do families, drastically changed our view of the family. The life-long suffering of women who had been victims of sexual violence by male family members in their early years, has become open for public debate.
3. In feminist perspective, motherhood appears as a trap for women, because society does not give them sufficient assistance or adequate financial remuneration for carrying the enormous burdens of childcare, but even puts all the blame on them when something goes wrong.
4. Feminists have developed new theories of gender-socialization shedding light on the difference between girls and boys in acquiring their gender-roles.
5. In conclusion gender is presented as the all-important category of social structuring in our societies. In science this fact has to be taken into account, acknowledging also that there is no gender-free science.

(Lecture in English)