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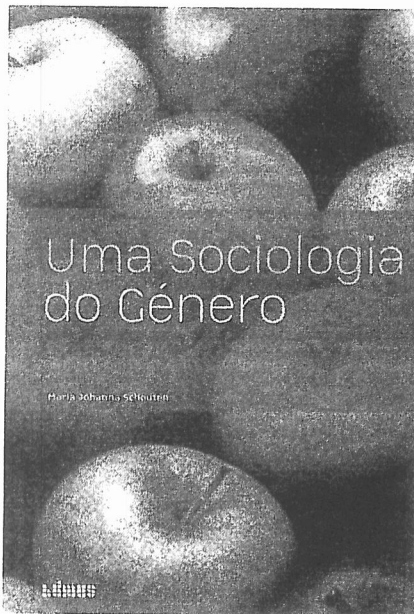
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ZINĀTNISKĀ DZĪVE

IZDOTĀS MONOGRĀFIJAS

Maria Johanna Schouten

A SOCIOLOGY OF GENDER



Gender Studies is a quite recent academic subject. The scientific research and the academic teaching on the social asymmetries between men and women began around 1970, during the second feminist wave. Today, this subject of study, with varying designations such as *women's studies*, *gender studies*, or *feminist studies*, exists in most universities in the world.

The study of gender, and in particular the sociology of gender, the subject of this book, is not a residual scientific category, but rather a specific way of observing and analyzing all areas of social reality. It takes into consideration the way people are involved in social relations and their ideas and convictions, depending on whether they are man or woman. Also in an epistemological perspective, the studies about gender are fundamental, as they show the age-long tendency for the production of knowledge to take the "masculine" as a norm. Gender

should be studied for the great importance of this principle in the organization of social life, but also because it is at the root of countless situations of inequality and injustice. All too often, the relegation of women to a secondary position is uncontested, and considered as "natural".

In short, the study of, in Pierre Bourdieu's words, "such a difficult topic", as the gender relations is motivated and warranted by its relevance, comprehensiveness, and the new possibilities it offers to social analysis.

In Portugal, women's studies were institutionalized first in 1977, with the installation of the CCF, the Commission of Women's Conditions (today CIG – Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality). This was an initiative of the government, in its



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efforts to promote the principle of equality of rights of men and women, as stipulated in the new Constitution. International tendencies also stimulated the interest for the “Women’s Issue”, such as the proclamation, by the United Nations, of 1975 as the International Women’s Year, followed by the Women’s Decade, in which projects were developed on a global scale to improve living conditions and the autonomy of women.

The studies about the “condition of women” or themes related to gender multiplied, and a landmark in Portugal was the year 1985 in which two major conferences were held. The first one, “Women in Portugal”, was the initiative of the Institute of Social Sciences (ICS) in Lisbon and the second, “The woman in Portuguese society – historical vision and present-day perspectives”

was held in the Faculty of Arts of Coimbra University. Since then, an increasing number of studies related to gender has been carried out in Portugal.

In 1991, the Portuguese Association for the Studies about Women (APEM) was founded, which publishes the journal *ex aequo*. Historical articles dedicated to women are published in the scholarly review *Faces de Eva*.

In higher education in Portugal, the theme of gender has obtained a place in the various curricula. The Department of Sociology of the University of Beira Interior was one of the first to introduce the subject of Sociology of Gender in its courses, first at Masters’ level and later also for undergraduates. The lectures of these course units constituted the basis and motives for the writing of the present book, *A Sociologia do Género (A Sociology of Gender)* which aims to be a general introduction to the study of gender, from a sociological perspective but with numerous links to the fields of anthropology and history.