

# Intersectionality and contextuality in social inequality

## „Putting the trias into context“

Dynamic-interactive models of social inequality conceptualize the interactions (e.g. “trias” gender x socioeconomic status x migration) as *configurations* which means patterns and interactions among elements that have paradoxical and conflicting meanings depending on specific context as a whole. “It is an empirical matter in any given context to see what concepts are important to the configuration of inequalities in discourse and in practice” (Marx-Ferree 2009: 8).

## Theory and hypotheses

### Intersectionality approach to social inequality

(e.g. Crenshaw 1989, McCall 2005, Winker & Degele 2009)

- 3 basic principles:
  - multidimensionality due to the multiple social positioning of individuals
  - intersectionality through intersections of different social group memberships at the same time
  - contextuality: interaction effects depend on and vary across social contexts

### ‚contextuality‘:

Social context varies/limitates the effects of the trias gender x socioeconomic status x migration.

- context ‚school‘: (+)
- context ‚university‘: (–), (selectivity of migrants)
- context ‚labour market‘: +

## Results

### Trias gender x socioeconomic status x migration

- confirmed in the social context ‚school‘
- not confirmed in the social context ‚university‘, but interactions of gender x migration x parenthood
- obvious in the social context ‚labour market‘, but also evidence for effects of age and parenthood

## Conclusion

### ‚Contextuality‘

- confirmation of the third principle of the intersectionality approach
- social contexts limitate the effects of the trias, make other social group memberships virulent

## Data

### Context ‚school‘ (Gottburgsen & Gross)

- competencies in reading and mathematics on the basis of international PISA-data 2006
- multidimensionality:
  - main effects for gender (M/F), socioeconomic status (Low/High), migration status (Migrant/Native)
- intersectionality: interaction of low socioeconomic status x male gender x migration background
  - compositional effects on reading – ranking:  
FNH, FMH, FNL > FML, MNH, MMH > MNL > MML
  - compositional effects on mathematics – ranking:  
MNH > MNH, FNH > FMH, MNL > FNL, MML > FML

### Context ‚university‘ (Buche & Gottburgsen)

- chances of employment (full-time, with opportunity to qualify) in the scientific field on the basis of an online survey of employees of a German university (740 respondents)
- multidimensionality:
  - full-time employment: main effects for female gender, low socioeconomic status, not for migration status
  - opportunity to qualify: main effect for female gender, not for low socioeconomic status or migration background
- intersectionality :
  - no interactions of socioeconomic status x gender x migration, but for female gender x parenthood

### Context ‚labour market‘ (Gottburgsen & Sixt)

- research overview on key labour market indicators, e.g. monthly income, labour market participation, professional positioning, career prospects, risk of unemployment
- multidimensionality:
  - main effects of gender, socioeconomic status and migration proved by a range of studies, with negative effects for females, for persons with low socioeconomic status and migration background
- intersectionality:
  - a lack of empirical studies which include systematically interaction effects,
  - but some evidence for interactions of gender x socioeconomic status x migration,
  - other important dimensions age and parenthood

## Outlook

### Need for further research

- educational system, esp. regarding university entrance and degrees
- labour market: systematic inclusion of the trias in empirical studies