

A Review of
Doing Gender Diversity: Readings in Theory and Real-World Experience

by
Rebecca F. Plante and Lis M. Maurer (eds.)
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The study of gender occupies much sociological thought and action and draws significantly from other scholarly traditions. Likewise, sociological studies of gender have helped transform how we think about, perceive, and “do” gender in real life (West and Zimmerman 1987). Gender as an analytical category helps explain society, yet many scholars recognize that gender without the study of other social identities is fallacious and not grounded in real-world experiences. Students at all levels of the academy struggle with the dilemma of how to focus on gender, but not at the exclusion of race, class, nationality, ability, and sexuality.

Doing Gender Diversity solves this dilemma in its careful choice of texts, sources, and organization. Divided into three sections: The Basics, Microcosm, and Macrocosm, it explains the individual and institutional performance of gender across an assortment of contexts in society. Although significantly rooted in sociology, a major strength of this book is in its interdisciplinarity. It includes texts from a variety of disciplines including psychology, journalism, and women’s and gender studies. It addresses key issues such as bodies, sexualities, marriage, family, work, and social change and concepts such as socialization, gender-binary, femininity, masculinity, and intersectionality. A second strength of this book is in its organization. Like its name, Plante and Maurer’s sources are diverse. They include and are organized by excerpts from classic texts, theory, opinion, empirical research, and memoir found in academic journals, internet web blogs, and popular writings. Authors vary from renowned gender scholars such as Barbara Risman, Patricia Hill Collins, and Judith Lorber to popular writers and topics like Kate Bornstein and the “pregnant man”.

Sociologist and Women’s Studies scholar Rebecca Plante is well-known for writing theoretically sound, yet accessible texts. She has written extensively on gender, sexualities, race, and citizenship. She co-edited a textbook with Michael S. Kimmel (2004) and has written her own (2006). At Ithaca College, Plante works with Lis M. Mauer, the founding Director of The Center for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Education, Outreach, and Services. Each brings over twenty years of academic, activist, and programmatic experience in the fields of gender and diversity.

I strongly recommend this book for a myriad of courses and projects. It is perhaps most obviously envisioned in sociology of gender courses, but it could supplement other courses which study the dynamics of gender and diversity, notably sociology of race, family, work, sexuality, and social movements. Because it draws from and distinguishes between different forms of rhetoric, this book could also be used in communication courses that study the connections between theory and popular rhetoric. It is suitable as an introductory text and, also, as a text designed to interest students at multiple levels. Here I am thinking of texts which are used for interdisciplinary, university-wide reading initiatives or texts used in projects that connect academic affairs to student services and universities to social justice communities.