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Feelings and the Social Transformation of Gender

Feelings of gender at different times and places are a relatively neglected aspect of the social transformation of gender.[1] Feelings represent a certain kind of personal and embodied meaning that belongs to the immediacy of the present, but which also integrates the past and the future (Chodorow 1999). Feelings integrate past experiences as they are shaped over time through a specific biography, and they make imprints of the future as they are part of a person's capacity to act and infuse life choices with personal meaning. Feelings are personal, but they are also thoroughly social since they are created in social contexts and social institutions in a given historical period. In this way, feelings can be seen as a central psychosocial link.

Feelings as Social

Erik H. Erikson, one of the first psychoanalysts to take an interest in the intertwinement of subjectivity and culture, says that people who share a historical era, class or ethnicity are guided by common images of the world,

[1] See, however, Layton (2004a), Aarseth (2007, 2009a, 2016), Roseneil (2007) and Walkerdine and Jimenez (2012) for some recent examples.

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but that these images also take a specific individualised form in every person: 'Infinitely varied, these images reflect the elusive nature of historical change; yet in the form of contemporary social models, of compelling prototypes of good and evil, they assume a decisive concreteness in every individual's ego development' (Erikson 1959: 18). Individual experience is always unique, but shared or similar life conditions may produce social patterns in feelings across the individual singularity: we often understand the feelings of our contemporaries much better than the feelings of those who belong to our parents' or our children's generation, and we recognise more immediately the feelings of those who belong to our own social groups than of those who do not. Different patterns of feelings reflect relational experiences and opportunities characteristic of the time and place of living. Hence, feelings are no less social than cultural meanings or social structures, but they represent the social in another form. Stephen Frosh says that people 'express in their feelings the dynamics of the social order itself' (Frosh 2011: 9). This includes, I would add, the dynamics of change of this social order.

My concern in this book is that the social transformation of gender also involves the work of feelings. Gender attains emotional meaning through the life course and in the transmission between generations at a particular time. I want to explore the link between generational transition and the negotiations and calibrations between women and men belonging to the same generation. To understand this dimension of social change, we must look into subtle and gradual historical processes working on the level of gender identities and gendered subjectivities, including motivations/capacities for autonomy in women and emotional intimacy in men, which may have provided a psychological readiness for structural and cultural changes and political interventions. The empirical basis for the analysis is a longitudinal research project that explores the feelings of gender across three generations of a sample of white, heterosexual women and men of different class backgrounds as they moved from childhood and youth to adult life, and what impact these feelings had on changing gender practices. New life projects gradually came into being, not only as outcomes of externally imposed norms, but also as the work of subjective feelings of gender.

The personal and the social are often thought of as complementary, mirroring the academic disciplines of psychology and sociology, as if individuals could exist without a society or a society could emerge without

individuals thinking, feeling and acting in certain ways. The mutual and dynamic character of the process in which both societies and individuals come into being makes it meaningless to use the word 'social' as a contrast to the 'personal' or the 'cultural'. Conceiving of the social or the societal as a totality that may be differentiated and expressed in many different forms seems to be a more fruitful approach. Such forms should neither be radically separated nor levelled out and reduced to each other. As the American anthropologist Michelle Z. Rosaldo once wrote, even though culture and personality cannot be separated, culture is not 'personality writ large', nor is personality 'culture in miniature' (Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974: 141). Different concepts and theories may be needed to grasp the specific dynamics of personal meaning, cultural meaning and larger social structures, but they will always emerge analytically as 'mutually constituted and fundamentally intertwined' (Roseneil 2007: 86) because, in different ways, they all make their marks on concrete acts and practices that can be made objects of study. The British cultural critic Raymond Williams argues that one needs to start from 'the whole way of life', from the whole texture, and from there one may go on to study 'particular activities, and their bearings on other kinds' (Williams 2011: 59). In accordance with this, I understand feelings as a specific kind of social 'activity' that takes place in persons, but not in isolation from other kind of experiences, other persons, other kinds of social activities or the historical situation. By analysing the meanings and feelings that are generated through the gendered practices of three generations and trying to understand how each generation strives to find ways to do gender that feel right in terms of their experiences, desires and circumstances, I seek ways to think about the inner and the outer world, desire and reality, structure and agency, and the subject and the object in ways that do not start out by separating them.

Gender Relations in a Process of Change

The life times of the three generations analysed in this book coincide with huge structural and cultural changes in gender relations in the Western world and beyond. There has been a sea change in the gender-normative

assumptions about who 'cares' and who 'works', who deserves what kind of rights and protection (Kessler-Harris 2003: 159). From the late 1960s onwards, there was a strong increase in women's education and employment in Europe. From the 1970s and 1980s, women with young children also entered the labour market in increasing numbers, and the percentage of women has increased in higher education, high professional and political positions during this period as well—although with important variations according to the sociocultural context and the kind of political support and interventions seen as advisable and legitimate within these contexts (Walby 1997; Pfau-Effinger 1998; Lewis 2001; Leira 2002; Crompton et al. 2007). Parallel to these processes, but at a slower pace, men's participation in childcare and household work has increased (Hobson 2002; Brandth and Kvande 2003; Kitterød and Rønsen 2012; Brannen 2015).

All this has had a significant impact on the gendered division of labour in society as a whole, but has evidently not eradicated all inequalities in women's and men's responsibilities, opportunities and privileges in work and family. Cross-nationally we find persistent gender gaps with regard to pay, work hours and career tracks (Crompton et al. 2007; Skrede and Wiik 2012). Attitudes to gender equality and actual practices do not always overlap and this inconsistency may be related both to cultural and structural factors (Knudsen and Wærness 2001; Bühlmann et al. 2010; Usdansky 2011; Hansen and Slagsvold 2012). Thus, the issue of who works and who cares—and more generally of what gender means or should mean—is still filled with unanswered questions, tensions and feelings, something that may be visible in the high divorce rates since the 1970s. The changing gender relations have also increased differences *between* women. Whereas the majority of women in the Scandinavian countries around the middle of the twentieth century lived comparable lives as housewives, although with different material standards and security, the lives of professional middle-class women and the lives of working-class women, and the few women who still chose to be housewives, have become more differentiated, as have the priorities among women (Melby 1999).

Seen from a bird's-eye view, these changes in gender relations and family models must be understood with reference to broader historical

processes of modernisation and modernity, and the way in which these processes have materialised in different national contexts. Processes of industrialisation, urbanisation, education and secularisation have had a profound impact on gender relations, class relations and generational relations. This development has increased trends of individualisation where the self and society are understood at large as reflexive projects and where 'standard biographies have become elective biographies' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002: 4, 24). On the one hand, this process has amplified individual life choices and social mobility; on the other hand, it has 'condemned' people to individualisation within standardised institutional settings and unpredictable and insecure labour markets where people are seen as responsible for their own success or failure. Theories of modernisation and individualisation have been met with questions regarding to what extent detraditionalisation runs parallel to increased reflexivity (Adkins 2004b) and to what degree it dissolves or maybe rather transforms social and emotional bonds between people (Giddens 1992; Jamieson 1998; Morgan 1999; Brannen et al. 2004; Roseneil 2007; Aarseth 2007). It is, however, beyond doubt that processes of individualisation have had a strong impact on gender relations. Gender differences have become less defined and legitimised by religion, tradition and family. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) point to three important trends in women's lives in modern society: the gradual changes in education, work, and sexuality and relationships. It has not been the major systemic changes, power struggles and revolutions that have changed the 'new normal biographies' of women, but rather the many little steps in education, work and the family. It is such 'trivial matters' that make history and society: 'It is perhaps only by comparing generations that we can perceive how steeply the demands imposed on individuals have been rising' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002: 76, 4). The Norwegian social anthropologist Marianne Gullestad has described this generational process in terms of a change in the moral imperatives, from 'being of use' to 'finding oneself' (Gullestad 1996). An example of the intertwinement of individualisation and gender from my study is the shifting relationships between mothers and daughters: as young women, the oldest generation of rural women felt it to be self-evident that their duties to their parents had an absolute priority over their own inclinations to take up paid work.

They would have felt like bad people if they had let their parents down. However, in the middle generation a rural mother who asks her young daughter to stay at home and help out may elicit self-pity or even rage in the daughter, and the daughter does not feel like a bad person at all. She feels she has the right to her own life. In the youngest generation the idea that the daughter should stay at home and help out is close to unthinkable both for mothers and daughters, and therefore not emotionally charged in the same way as for the two older generations. Here the young daughter would instead feel like a bad person if she did not pursue a good education and become independent of her parents, as successful young women should. The example also lends support to the claims that personal bonds are not dissolved, but rather transformed in this process, and that the process is not guided only by reflexive considerations.

Processes of modernisation are dependent on timing and the particular route from agrarian to industrial society, as well as the roles that various social groups have played in this (Duncan 1995; Birgit Pfau-Effinger 1998). The ways in which different national welfare regimes frame family and equality policies have been given particular attention in order to understand different developments in family models and the choices made by women and men in different national contexts and by different social groups (Esping-Andersen 1990; Lewis 1992; Korpi 2000; Leira 2002; Den Dulk and Doorne-Huiskes 2007). Feminist scholars have analysed these welfare regimes with emphasis on gender and unpaid work, childcare facilities, leave arrangements, availability of flexible working arrangements and the ways in which taxation systems encourage or discourage men and women to share paid employment (Lewis 1992; Leira 2002; Den Dulk and Doorne-Huiskes 2007). These structural, economic and political conditions are important framings for changing gender relations; however, they do not by themselves explain the changes or stabilities in these relations. Research has concluded that gender arrangements depend on a complex interplay between structural conditions, cultural values, institutions and agency—for instance, cultural ideals concerning motherhood/fatherhood that are incorporated into existing social policies (Acker 1989; Duncan 1995; Pfau-Effinger 1998; Den Dulk and Doorne-Huiskes 2007).

Gender Contracts and Agency

The changing work and family articulations may be seen as expressions of shifts in broader societal 'gender contracts' (Hirdman 1988; Duncan 1995; Hagemann and Åmark 1999; Lewis 2001). This perspective aims at grasping the hegemonic normative assumptions about gender relations in a given historical period and place, the underlying norms about what women and men should do, think and be. Such implicit cultural norms feed into state politics and institutions, as well as into regulations of the labour market interpretations and negotiations between individual women and men in the family and beyond (Haavind 1984a, b; Hirdman 1988; Duncan 1995). The Swedish historian Yvonne Hirdman sees the breadwinner/carer family model as an expression of a societal housewife contract that was hegemonic in most European countries between 1930 and 1965, emerging in the wake of the private patriarchy of the nineteenth century. In the following decades she identifies an equity contract that is realised in the full-time/part-time family model, and an equality contract that is the basis of the dual-earner/dual-carer family (Hirdman 1990). During this process, gender differentiation becomes increasingly culturally illegitimate and socially irrelevant with regard to citizenship in all its dimensions (Hagemann and Åmark 1999). From the field of political theory, Nancy Fraser has suggested that different normative visions may be seen as operative in the new gender contracts: in the universal breadwinner model, women are upgraded as citizens and workers on par with men, and care is moved from the family to the market and the state; in the caregiver parity model, care work is kept within the family and normally carried out by the woman, but is culturally upgraded and supported by public funding; finally, in the universal caregiver model, women's life pattern is also taken as the norm for men so that the couple will share both care and breadwinning (Fraser 1997). What unites the different approaches to cultural change is that they all indicate a normative move away from a gender order characterised by unquestioned differences in norms, rights and obligations for women and men towards a situation where women's and men's lives have become more alike and where gender equality has

gained an increasing foothold as a common norm. This change in normative ideas does not necessarily coincide with all ongoing practices, instead sometimes disguising them. As the Norwegian psychologist Hanne Haavind's studies of negotiations in married couples indicate, what was earlier understood in terms of gender obligations may now be legitimised as free choice, loyalty, love, attraction and so on. She says that the essence of the new femininity is to 'make inequalities appear as equalities' (Haavind 1984b: 147). Thus, the fundamental tension between the abstract assumption of equality in the public sphere of Western capitalist societies and gender difference in the private sphere is not solved through democratisation and individualisation alone. Gender remains a persistent element of 'disorder' in modern society (Pateman 1989; Hirdman 1990; Hagemann and Åmark 1999; Solheim 2007; Melby et al. 2008).

The gender contract frames the ways in which women and men are integrated in society. It accentuates the reproductive force in a given hegemonic social and cultural order, working as the unnoticed background against which gender arrangements are negotiated and decided upon. However, the concept may also open up for an understanding of gender arrangements as complex and variable historical outcomes of many interacting societal processes. In this way it also leaves room for agency.[2] As is the case with other social contracts, gender contracts do not presuppose equality between the partners, but a certain amount of voluntariness and active participation without which the concept of agency would lose its meaning. This agency is also present in relationships and practices in daily life, within the varying constraints and opportunities given by class, ethnicity and age at a given time and place (see also McNay 2004 and Adkins 2014b). An important dimension here is the gradual and multilevel reciprocal shifts between women and men when it comes to paid work and care: 'the process whereby women's behaviour has changed in

[2] In some versions gender contracts are seen as a reproductive force working along with historical change: new gender contracts are basically new expressions of the same underlying, patriarchal gender system, at least until further notice (Hirdman 1988; Haavind 1984a, b). Other versions (Hagemann and Åmark 1999; Duncan 1995) find that the value of the concept lies precisely in its opening up for agency and (real) social change. My use of the concept is based on this latter understanding.

recent decades, requiring reciprocal change in men, which in turn will require reciprocal change in women, and so on, in a cycle of continual adaption and change' (Gamles et al. 2007: 17; see also Thompson 1997). Such reciprocal interchanges in daily life do not only rely upon perceptions and reflexions, but also involve feelings of gender: What kind of personal experiences—understood as feelings, meanings and practices—were behind the increasing support of the change in the gendered division of work in the family and beyond? By looking into how practices, meanings and feelings of gender are reconfigured over time and how such 'micro histories' Walkerdine (2012: 86) contribute to the larger history of the development of new gender contracts, we may gain more insight into the mutual dynamics between structural, political, cultural and psychological change. Since the concept of feeling incorporates meaning and process, it may in some respects be better suited to comparison over time and place than more specific and isolated dimensions of behaviour like women's employment patterns or changes in dominant family models, which say little about the underlying processes or the context of the phenomena.

Generational Transition and Transmission

Intergenerational transmission has a dynamic and open character and covers much more than the sheer adaption to or protest against parental values, norms and models of behaviour (Bertaux and Thompson 1993; Bertaux and Bertaux-Wiame 1997; Thompson 1997). As will be elaborated in Chap. 2, relational experience in families are loaded with emotional meaning, with 'projections and identifications, love and anger, symbols and desires' (Bertaux and Thompson 1993: 7). Issues of gender identification play a special role in intergenerational transmission, and feelings of gender originating in the familial context may be in tension or even contradiction with other gender lessons of the same family and beyond. There are several reasons why socialisation is not about mechanical learning or has deterministic outcomes. One is that the context for action changes over time—what is learnt will be put to use in new situations. Another is that experiences are processed psychologically and

reconstructed over time in the light of new experiences. And, finally, this reconstruction or work of integration exceeds a purely reflexive or articulated level. What is transmitted may consist of more or less articulated feelings of self and others (Benjamin 1995; Layton 1998; Chodorow 1999; Chodorow 2012) or it may be a kind of knowledge embedded in everyday practices and relationships (Bourdieu 1990; Morgan 1999). Transmission may result in generational breaks and ambivalences, as well as in continuities and reproduction (Brannen 2015: 12; see also Bertaux and Bertaux-Wiame 1997).

The interviews in the project on which this book is based focus on childhood, youth and the transition to adulthood in each generation. This means that two temporal perspectives are combined: the process of *transition* from child to adult in each generation and the processes of *transmission* between generations. Seen together, these processes connect different historical moments of the life course, as well as different dimensions of meaning and practice within and between generations.

The ongoing dynamic in life transitions between societal change and a person's psychological reconstruction of cultural and emotional gender will be approached as an interchange between *gender identities* (how I see my self as gendered), *gendered subjectivities* (the kind of person I am, how I feel) and *sociocultural contexts* (which potentials of my current gender identity and gendered subjectivity that are possible to express and pursue in a specific sociocultural context) (see also Nielsen and Rudberg 1994; Nielsen 1996, 2015; Thomson et al. 2011). Gender identities involve dimensions like belonging to a gender category, which can be felt as more or less certain or secure, the specific content of what it means to be a man/woman, and whether this is felt as positive or not. Gendered subjectivities denote particular ways of being and relating produced by relational experience. It includes psychological capacities and orientations, for instance, the extent to which one is able to see others as separate subjects, the ability to be alone and close to others, or the kind of activities one feels drawn to. It also includes the intrapsychic conflicts that may exist in these matters and the defences that are mobilised. To the degree that such capabilities and conflicts are culturally gendered, the subjectivity can be relatively single-gendered or relatively multi-gendered. If multi-gendered subjectivities are lived with few intrapsychic tensions and defences, they

may also be understood as degendered subjectivities. Gender identity and gendered subjectivity cannot be entirely separated empirically, but the concepts represent an analytical effort to grasp gender as both reflexive and non-reflexive. The floating border between gender identities and gendered subjectivities are taken into account by the comprehensive concept of 'feelings of gender'.

As the interchange between gender identities, gendered subjectivities and sociocultural constraints and opportunities continues during the life course, relationships between parents and children will become part of it, and the personal stories of the parents and those of their children will cross each other at several points in time (see also Morgan 1999). In the empirical chapters (Chaps. 5, 6 and 7) we explore these interchanges through an analytical model that combines different aspects of the *experiences* of gender—practices, feelings and meanings—with the trippel *temporal* dimension of transition from childhood to adult life, from one generation to the next, and in changing historical contexts. Thus, on the one hand, the analysis connects different dimensions and areas of experiences *within* each generation and *between* women and men in this generation, and, on the other hand, *links* the generations to each other. The analytical model explores six areas of experience and how they are connected to each other within each generation, and how feelings, reflections and life choices[3] lead to the gendered practice that became the point of departure for the next generation. For each of the three generations, we look at the connections between:

1. WORK: the perception of the division of work and care in their childhood families.
2. RELATIONSHIPS: the feelings of gender that grew out of the relational experience connected with this division of work and care.
3. BODIES: the feelings of gender with regard to sexuality, and to one's own gendered body and those of others.

[3] The concept of 'choice' is in this book used to indicate a dimension of agency, but does not imply that agencies or choices are based on purely cognitive or rational deliberations (as in 'rational choice' theory). Life choices or life projects are seen as complicated outcomes dependent on many sources, some of which are the emotional or even unconscious meaning that the choice has for the acting person.

4. REFLECTIONS: the ways in which these feelings of gender found their way into articulated reflections on gender.
5. PRACTICES: the way in which one's own family as an adult was organised, and the gendered division of work and care this implied.
6. ATTITUDES: finally, how all these experiences are reflected in thinking about gender equality as a contemporary personal and political issue.

By combining intergenerational transmission with the changing sociocultural context, I am bringing together two meanings of generation.[4] One is the *genealogical* meaning, which points at the kinship position of being children, parents and grandparents. The other is the *historical* meaning, which sees generations as groups of people who share a distinctive culture or a self-conscious identity by virtue of having experienced the same historical events at roughly the same time in their lives (Alwin and McCammon 2004: 27). The idea of historical generations goes back to Karl Mannheim, who argued that people who share a common location in the social and historical process might establish such generational identities in the period of youth. In every such location, Mannheim says, there is 'a tendency pointing towards certain definite modes of behaviour, feeling and thought' (Mannheim 1952: 291). According to Mannheim, this plays a decisive role in historical change, as it will provide refreshed views at the passing on of social and cultural traditions, even though not all generations will be equally active and visible. In my analysis I focus more specifically on how different genders and generations display different patterns of feelings through the way they act and talk, directly or indirectly, about gender. Is it possible to see patterns that are more typical for one generation than for another? Are they equally clear and do they have the same consequences across social class? What is the connection between patterns within and between generations? I do not claim that the identified patterns fit everyone equally well, but that they may still crystallise into a shared feeling of 'the way things are', or a sense of life, in a given period of time (Williams 2011; see also Ellingsæter and Widerberg

[4] The relationship between generation and cohort and how these concepts may be related to social change will be further discussed in Chap. 3.

2012: 21). For instance, the generally positive relationships daughters had with their mothers in the eldest generation, and the generally much more negative relationships between mothers and the women in the middle generation emerge as a marked shift in the life-world between these two generations of women, in spite of the variation in mother–daughter relationships that is also always present. My aim is to trace the experiences during the life course that made women and men in different historical generations feel differently about gender and how this became a drive towards new life projects and changed gender relations. These feelings may also have consequences for what cultural values and political issues different people tend to identify or disidentify with. In the words of Raymond Williams, this is the real indication of change:

> the absolute test by which revolution can be distinguished, is the change in the form of activity of a society, in its deepest structure of relationships and feelings. (1979, p. 420)

Generational Patterns as Normative Creations

When many people in a generation share the same feelings towards something, they tend to react in much the same way to new societal opportunities, for instance, investing in the same kind of new family model. In this way the model gradually becomes a social norm, which may be experienced as hegemonic or even coercive for those who do not feel at home in it. Hence, if new life projects are shared by many in the same generation, they may contribute to the social transformation of gender, although often in more incremental and less obvious ways than the kind of changes that are articulated within political contexts or public cultural discourses. The North American historian John Modell argues for a social-historical approach to the life course, which can grasp the two-way relationships between large-scale historical change and the way in which individual lives are lived: individual experiences during periods of change may *aggregate* to constitute a new *context* for others living through these changes: 'Even "kids" can make history, as their choices aggregate into behavioural patterns and, rationalized, become normative' (Modell

1989: 22). Thus, cohort effects may indirectly constitute normative patterns and feed into new generational identities. Bertaux and Thompson argue along the same lines when they say that 'a sufficient minority' can contribute to the momentum of change: by 'voting with their feet, they can transform the structures of social space or demography' (Bertaux and Thompson 1997: 2). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim make a similar point when they talk about how 'new normal biographies' are produced by numerous small steps that simultaneously may have a dimension of adaption and yet over time aggregate to a challenge of the existing conditions (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002: 55, 76). This excludes neither variations and tensions within such patterns, both in accordance with class difference and individual variation, and between women and men in the different generations, nor the existence of other patterns in different subgroups.

Social and geographical mobility is characteristic for times of industrialisation and post-industrialisation. There have been typical *social pathways* understood as trajectories of education, work, family patterns and places to move from and to (Elder et al. 2003: 8). As many studies have indicated, there are often personal costs associated with a class journey (Walkerdine 1990; Mahony and Zmroczek 1997; Lawler 1999; Trondman 2010). In particular, studies from the UK emphasise that class travellers experienced their families to hold them back and not being supportive to their upward mobility (Bertaux and Thompson 1997: 23; Lawler 2000: 112; Brannen 2015: 143). The sample analysed in this book is taken from a Norwegian context and the Scandinavian story appears to be somewhat different here. Due to the cultural and political emphasis on equality and the relatively high social security provided by the welfare state (see Chap. 4), the Scandinavian version of the class journey associated with industrialisation and de-industrialisation came to resemble a 'group travel' rather than the individual travels depicted in the British studies, and this collective character may have allayed some of the cultural and psychological ambivalences. The Norwegian sociologist Ivar Frønes has compared this kind of mobility to a lock chamber: you are lifted onto a new level together with many others in your cohort and thus never leave the space perceived as 'normal' (Frønes 2001). The foremost example of this kind of collective class journey is the generation

born after the Second World War. A large number of young people could at that point take advantage of an expanding and free educational system, rising material standards in their families and a restructured labour market, and become urban middle class. The process altered the class composition in Norway from being a society of mostly small farmers, fishermen and workers to a society where the most 'normal' is to be middle class or lower middle class (Ringdal 2010). The difficulties for those who were not part of this collective journey may have increased, but it reduced the strain on those who left: 'Many made a small class journey without giving it much thought', as the Swedish sociologist Mats Trondman expresses it (Trondman 2010: 252). Furthermore, the process of geographical and social mobility took place over two or three generations and was characterised by a sequence of short-distance moves (only one move up in relation to the class of origin) (Ringdal 2010). Even if the class journey did take you away from your family of origin and could be marked by a sense of dislocation, it was simultaneously often part of a generational 'relay race' in the family. The compressed story of modernisation in combination with these gradual moves and the support from the welfare state have contributed to a perception of the journey as a move from rural to urban culture rather than from working class to middle class, as was the case in the UK. Thus, the character of this particular period of social mobility in Norway meant travelling *along with* and not *against* the shifting notions of what was considered normal and expected. Another way to say this is that we have here a case where staying within the hegemonic pattern and at the same time contributing to social change have been two sides of the same coin. The collective class journey provided a bigger space and a more privileged position in relation to contributing to new cultural forms, often complex and heterogeneous, reflecting both the culture of origin, the impact from educational institutions, new demands in work life and other current cultural and social impulses (Frønes 2001; Nielsen and Rudberg 2006). Some of the new things to be invented on the way were the norms and practices of modern gender equality. Thus, the generational sample in our study aggregates into normative patterns not only because it belongs to the majority with regard to ethnicity and sexuality, but also because it is typical for the specific type of urbanisation and social mobility that took place in Norway during the twentieth century.

Whereas our sample is geared towards illuminating incremental changes taking place in majority groups, it is important to keep in mind that many aspects of the social transformation of gender may not be covered. The design does not include people who in the course of these three generations did not move to the city, and only to some degree those who did not enter a generational process of social mobility. The sample cannot say anything particular about the situation of people who stayed single, who did not have children, or who identified as gays, lesbians, bisexual or transgender, or the new immigrant population, who started to arrive in limited numbers in the early 1970s. What the sample *can* say something about is how majority groups who live the normative and hegemonic gender order of its time and class, in the course of generational transmission, may also contribute to the social transformation of gender. It is the significance of the changing patterns of feelings of people living different kinds of 'normalised' lives at different points of time that I explore here.

Changing the Norm from Within

What may a generational and psychosocial study of the social patterns feelings of gender add to the understanding of the social transformation of gender? I will end this chapter with a short discussion of this in relation to three perspectives on change in contemporary feminist theory taken from political theory, poststructuralist/queer theory and practice theory. In contrast to feminist work in the 1970s and 1980s, which put emphasis on structural change, contemporary feminist theories are more oriented towards agency, practices, processes, symbolic power and meaning. With regard to this, my view is that including the feelings of gender would contribute to improving the understanding of how gender norms and practices are both connected with larger social forces and, at the same time, may be transformed 'from within'. Feelings find their ways into people's agencies during their life course and at specific historical times.

Political theory works with the assumption that in order to be political, identities must be explicit and articulated, and that political action is characterised by having a collective and public form. Politics is about

participation and about making claims to be included and recognised, to have a voice, to participate and be able to pursue one's social and economic interests in the public sphere. It is about strategic choices made by social actors representing social groups and movements (Hobson 2003: 2). However, changes in gender relations can and often do take place outside the sphere of articulated political claims and collective political identities. They may be consequences of changing historical, structural and cultural conditions and the way people feel, reflect and respond to these by making other choices in their own lives—for instance, a woman deciding to take up paid work or a father wanting to spend more time with his children. What I see in our sample is that such choices and negotiations can be based on more or less conscious reflection, but they need not be articulated *as* political projects or take the form of individual struggles in order to happen. It may be sufficient that they appear necessary or possible, meaningful or desirable for people. Among our informants, we also find several who distance themselves from feminist politics, and even some who distance themselves from gender equality politics, but who nevertheless have made choices in their own lives that increased gender equality in their families. This may partly be explained by the contributions of feminist politics and discourses to new senses of normality without making gender an explicit concern for people. Kate Nash, for instance, argues that women who say 'I'm not a feminist, but…' and then articulate norms that would have been unthinkable without feminist politics still embody a social resistance against women's subordination (Nash 2002: 323). However, the connection between new practices and new political claims could also go the other way: the emergence of new feelings and practices in everyday life may work as silent conditions for the cognitive framing chosen by the actors in a movement or in a political process. As argued above, when many do the same thing, it is also in effect a collective force as it changes the horizon of what is perceived as normal and justifiable. An exploration of how feelings change in the course of generations may thus help to illuminate this 'inverse' mode of processes of change.

The approach to change in *poststructuralist and queer theory* works on the level of cultural categories and representations: normative categories of gender and sexuality need to be deconstructed and destabilised so that

it becomes clear that they are not natural or innocent entities. Since categories are seen as constituted by processes of exclusion, they will always be products of power struggles (Butler 1990; Corbett 2009). As categories in this way are internally dependent on what is externalised, they will also be internally unstable and targets of continual resignification. In Judith Butler's version, the poststructuralist point of the constitutional instability of norms is combined with a theory of performativity, which is defined as 'the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effect that it names' (Butler 1993: 2). The constitutional instability of gender, in combination with its performative character, is what provides the possibility of change for Butler (Stormhøj 2003). This opens up for the possibility of changing the norm from within, but as such resignifications are merely coincidental consequences of the indeterminacy of language, triggered by unconscious processes in the speaker, their effects are also undetermined.[5] Raewyn Connell (2009) has questioned the value of Butler's idea of generalised instability because it cannot take into account that in some historical periods, gender identities and relations change fast, while in others they change slowly. Nor does the concept explain why some people would want to change gender arrangements, while others would resist (Connell 2009: 90).[6] Without a concept of change connected to their broader social uses, norms are in practice often only analysed as becoming more and more restrictive every time they are repeated (see, for instance, Corbett 2009: 13).

Queer theory is understood as transformative in itself by intervening in the politics of knowledge. The idea is that theoretical and practical critique are intertwined. The inquiries begin from the margins, with people

[5] Butler here combines Derrida's theory of the instability of signification with Lacanian psychoanalysis: something had to be repressed in order to become a subject within the symbolic order, and this produces psychic excesses that may surface and disturb an otherwise obedient gender performance. This gives her theory a dualism of adaption (the subject) and protest (the unconscious, the psyche), which will be discussed further in Chap. 2. Since the protests are unconscious, the incorrect performances may disturb the power, but hardly rearticulate it (Stormhøj 2003: 132).

[6] See also McNay (2004) and Stormhøj (2013) for similar critiques of Butler's ahistorical and abstract concept of agency. In her work within queer theory, Butler has engaged more explicitly in political discussions, and argued that deconstruction and resignification alone are not enough to make social and political transformation happen: 'Something besides theory must take place, such as interventions at social and political levels that involve actions, sustained labor and institutionalized practice' (Butler 2004, 204).

who are engaged in non-conforming gender and sexual practices and who do not feel like they fit into whatever 'we' is being articulated as a norm (Stormhøj 2013: 65). However important this approach is, it also has a tendency to conceptualise the dominant norm as monolithic and undynamic (McNay 2004; Stormhøj 2013). The dominant norm emerges as a static background to non-normative gender performances and the question of what motivates some people to adhere to this norm moves out of focus (Hollway 1984; Layton 1998). But gender norms are neither deterministic nor monolithic or static. They vary between men and women and between classes and generations, and this creates internal incoherencies and contradictions within prevailing gender norms. The norms also change historically, and often also within the life course of individual people, without necessarily being dependent on destabilising discursive interventions from non-normative groups. Thus, the 'dominant norm' is a moving target, and some of the movement may be explored by looking into the feelings of gender in those groups that adhere to these norms or through their behaviour modify them or create new ones.

Feminist approaches departing from Bourdieu's *practice theory* have a structurally and historically based understanding of change, combined with an emphasis on the ways in which such change also takes place as 'lived relations'. Practice is motivated by people's perceptions, feelings and representations, not just abstract social structures and economic forces (McNay 2004: 184). It is necessary to enter the 'phenomenology of social space', a space that is relational in its structure and tied to experience in specific contexts, in order to understand how reflexivity and agency work as elements in both societal reproduction and change. Such reflexivity could be understood as an ongoing transformative practice '*simultaneous* with the normal course of daily life, but also *constitutive* of how life is lived in history, across generations and in personal interactions' (Silva 2005: 96). By producing gender in ever-new ways, new 'normalities' also come into being. Thus, change does not necessarily imply normative constraints, individual resistance or collective mobilisation, but can be located 'in regard to a shift in the conditions of social reproduction itself' (Adkins 2004a: 9). Gender does not dissolve through this reflexivity, but is constantly in a process of *reconfiguration*. It is reflexivity itself that becomes 'a habit of gender in late modernity' (Adkins 2004b:

192). Whereas Bourdieu mainly sees changes in the habitus as a non-reflexive bodily practice, scholars like McNay, Adkins and Silva emphasise the interaction of reflexive and prereflexive dimensions of meaning, especially in relation to modern rearticulations of gender.

These perspectives are close to my approach, as I also focus on the gradual reconfiguration of gender over generations that draw on practices, reflections and feelings. However, the emotional or prereflexive dimensions of agency, reflections and motivation are not particularly elaborated in practice theories (see Aarseth et al. 2016). Feelings are seen as direct effects in the individual body and mind of a restricted social context, and social and psychological explanations of behaviour tend to be seen as alternatives (Skeggs 1997; McNay 2004). Emotional responses are primarily connected with experienced social inequalities, in particular class differences: feelings of shame, fear or anxiety in working-class people and feelings of resentment, pity or guilt in middle-class people emerge when they become aware of 'the others', feel devalued by them or feel they must defend themselves psychologically against them. Psychological tensions are here understood as a direct response to perceived injustice, and it is not taken into account that different people will experience this conflict in different ways depending on their previous relational experience (see, for instance, Reay 2005, 2015; Skeggs 2005).[7] Since the psychological concepts are primarily used to describe pain and psychological defence, the emotional aspects of agency also become tied up with these negative sides of experience, whereas the positive and formative potentials of feelings are insufficiently explored. Furthermore, the prereflexive or emotional dimension is used to understand how the past becomes part of the present, biographically and generationally, but not how it may also anticipate the future as social change is seen as connected only with the reflexive dimension. The Norwegian sociologist Helene Aarseth has argued that this division between prereflexive belonging and reflexive distance makes it difficult to understand what actually motivates change. She suggests instead trying to capture the *resonance* between prereflexive

[7] More psychosocially oriented work on class includes how class relations may also permeate the interaction between parents and children long before the children have become aware of class differences (see, for instance, Walkerdine and Lucey 1989; Layton 2010; Lucey et al. 2016).

and reflexive appropriations of new meanings (Aarseth 2009a: 7). The analysis of how women and men in generational chains rework gender lends support to Aarseth's more general claim. What they both tell and live, practically and emotionally, not only connects with the past, but also provides them with agency to change the future. Thus, what I want to add to the feminist theories of practice is a more historicised conception of psychological structure, a more psychologically informed understanding of the mutual creation of the social context and feelings, and an understanding of how biographically anchored emotional meanings may sometimes be drivers for change, not merely resisting or delaying it.

New norms are not necessarily more inclusive or pluralistic than old ones, since it is not only individual variation presses towards change but also changing patterns of similarities between individuals that may contribute to emptying an earlier norm of its meaning by disconnecting gender from what used to be gendered practices. This raises a question about the relation between *destabilising* a category and *weakening* its significance in different areas of life. Does a destabilisation of the binary structure of gender and of sexuality lead to fewer social inequalities between people of different genders or different sexual identities? And, conversely, does increased social equality between women and men or between people with different sexual identities make the gender category less important, constraining and exclusionary? Is it gender as practice or gender as category that is the root of evil? These are also questions I keep in mind in my analysis of what aspects of gender are done, undone and redone across the three generations.

The Structure of the Book

In the following three chapters I will elaborate some of the theoretical and empirical assumptions for my analysis. *Chapter 2* will discuss the concept of feelings in connection with theories of subjectivity, identity and affect. It will look specifically at theories about gender and subjectivity, and in what ways it makes sense to talk about social patternings of feelings. *Chapter 3* will dive into the methodological aspects of the study, the design, procedures and presentation of the data. It will discuss how

one can 'read' feelings from qualitative interviews and will look at the many methodological challenges that arise when studying and comparing generations. *Chapter 4* will set some of the societal context for the three generations of the study, particularly the Norwegian context and in what ways it is similar to and different from other European countries. The structural, economic and political conditions for family and work, and the changing cultural contexts for the youth of each of the three generations will be chief areas of focus. The subsequent three chapters—*Chaps. 5, 6 and 7*—are dedicated to an inductive analysis of the dominant patterns within each generation organised along the six thematic issues mentioned above: work, relationships, bodies, reflections, practices and attitudes. In the three last chapters the patterns found in the different generations are seen and analysed from different methodological and psychosocial angles. *Chapter 8* is a methodological interlude where the results from the analyses are discussed along the dimensions of time and place. It includes reflections on how the effects of age, generation and historical period are intertwined with the production of social change. Furthermore, it includes a comparison with selected generational studies from the UK in order to see what may be specifically Scandinavian in the patterns detected and what might have wider applicability. *Chapter 9* summarises the changes and continuities of gendered subjectivities across the three generations and examines them in terms of different historical theories of psychological gender. *Chapter 10* summarises the changing social patterns of feeling gender and how they have fed into new life projects and ideas about gender and gender equality.