



## Presentation and Book Release: „Genderperspektiven in der Biologie“

# How does gender matter for biological sciences?

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin  
Unter den Linden 6, Room 2103  
November 27, 2014

The aim of this colloquium is to introduce the subject of gender perspectives on biology – from different biological areas, as well as feminist criticism of natural sciences – in dialogue with a presentation of related research conducted at the Biology Institute at HU. Applying gender perspectives to biology can, for example, involve asking questions about how our notions of masculinity and femininity affect theories and research in biology, how language and metaphors impact interpretations of various biological phenomena and how biological arguments are used in public debate and applied on human relationships and behavior.

18:15-18:45 *Malin Ah-King: Gender Perspectives on Biology*  
18:45-19:10 *Gerlind Lehmann: Sexual conflict - just the male perspective?*  
19:15-20:00 Joint discussion on biases in biological sciences - causes, consequences and possible solutions,  
Book release „Genderperspektiven in der Biologie“, free distribution afterwards  
Chair: *Prof. Dr. Kerstin Palm*

### *Malin Ah-King:* **Gender Perspectives on Biology**

Historians of science have explored how cultural processes affect scientific endeavors and how they affect which theoretical interpretations are supported in a certain societal context. Therefore scientific endeavours cannot be isolated from the society's ideology.

This lecture explores how scientists' notions of gender have influenced theories and research on bacteria, cells, brains, hormones and animal behaviour. The history of sexual selection theory shows that stereotypic notions about females and males have led to the overlooking very important issues, such as female multiple mating. Over time and due to criticism, stereotypic notions of, for example, "coy" females have been abandoned. Overcoming these biases have led to entire new research fields and the exploration of a diversity of phenomena.

Dr. Malin Ah-King is an interdisciplinary evolutionary biologist and gender researcher, Department of History, HU Berlin.

### *Gerlind Lehmann:* **Sexual conflict - just the male perspective?**

Reproduction is one characteristic of live and normally needs the interplay of two partners, which mate and exchange genetic material. However, interests between the sexes can differ and could lead to different results, with "sexual conflict" as one possibility. Other solutions like mutual cooperation could also be feasible. Therefore it is astonishing to concentrate the scientific debate in sexual selection research and behavioural biology on „sexual conflict“. A prerequisite to understand reproductive interactions is the analysis of interests. I will present my results on bushcricket mating systems, in which males provide gifts in exchange for the opportunity to mate. The costs and benefits have been weighted against each other. Biological research has advanced techniques to analyse single trade-offs, but a dynamic framework to study settlements between the sexes is still lacking.

PD Dr. rer. nat. Gerlind Lehmann is an evolutionary biologist studying nuptial gifts and mating systems in bushcrickets, at the Department of Biology, HU Berlin.

#### CONVENED BY

Zentrum für transdisziplinäre  
Geschlechterstudien (ZtG) und  
Institut für Geschichtswissenschaften  
der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

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