

„Bodies of Surveillance: Disability, Femininity and the Keepers of the Gene Pool”

During the 2005 - 2006 academic year, the Lehrstuhl für Soziologie in der Heilpädagogik, Sozialpolitik und Sozialmanagement hosted DAAD fellow, Sara Vogt. The North American cultural studies scholar, came from the University of Illinois at Chicago where she is currently pursuing her doctorate in Disability Studies. Sara Vogt came to the University of Cologne in order to compile research for her dissertation, which compares the modern histories of disability and gender in Germany and the United States. Her dissertation entitled, “Bodies of Surveillance: Disability, Femininity and the Keepers of the Gene Pool,” investigates the categorical constructions of disability and gender as employed by early twentieth century eugenic science. Looking specifically at German and U.S. eugenic ideology, practices, and policies in the 1920s, it examines the various roles women played in the campaign for racial purity. This project poses the following research questions:

- What was the status of femininity in this eugenic project that placed white, middle class women as mediators between medical science, disabled bodies, and the general public, thereby staking the claim that such women were ultimately responsible for securing the racial purity of the nation?
 - How did this process of mediation position women subjectively as the “soft face” of masculine science and objectively as scrutinized bodies responsible for surveying the future reproductive potential of the nation?
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