



REPORT

Gender Stereotypes: the impact of socialisation and education

QEC-EUROPEAN REGENERATION AREAS NETWORK
RUE VIEUX MARCHÉ AUX GRAINS 48,1000 BRUSSELS
TEL: +32 2 524 45 45, FAX: +32 2 524 44 31
E-MAIL: INFO@QEC-ERAN.ORG WEB: WWW.QEC-ERAN.ORG

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INTRODUCTION

During recent years, the influx of women into the workplace has not come hand in hand with a sufficient redistribution of household chores and caretaking between men and women. Despite the differences in the degree to which the welfare state is developed, along with national cultural traditions, this trend can be seen to recur to a greater or lesser extent in all the European Union countries. The underlying cause of this inequality is socio-cultural in nature in as much as a model assigning different identities and responsibilities according to sex endures. Within this context, concepts such as “twofold presence” describe the living conditions of many adult women who, in order to reconcile the work-family dilemma, see how their daily lives entail an accumulation of work and family responsibilities. In this way, there are a multitude of voices pointing to different kinds of socialisation based on gender as a key explanatory factor and at the same time as one of the challenges that must be faced to achieve true equality.

1. FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE ON EUROPEAN UNION GENDER POLICIES

The European Union (EU) is an important institutional reference for gender policies. It has been so since in the 1970s it began to set legal and regulatory

frameworks to achieve the objectives set in this realm. Experts distinguish three major stages in the design and planning of these policies within the European setting (Astelarre, 2005):

- The objective of the **first phase** is to abolish workplace discrimination against women.
- The **second phase** shifts the focus from the results of discrimination to the roots of inequality. So the objective is to foster equal opportunities through training and employment. In this phase, positive action is defined to overcome the gap between formal equality and true equality: legislation is necessary but not sufficient.
- The gender mainstreaming is the **third phase**. In this case the objective is to overcome the limits of positive action. But the gender mainstreaming doesn't replace the other equal opportunities policies because it is an additional strategy to neutralise the discriminatory effects of these policies. Amongst other factors, it shows a dual need: first is a change in the target of the policies -from women to both men and women- and second is an assessment of their gender impact.

1.1. THE GENDER MAINSTREAMING STRATEGY AND WORK-FAMILY RECONCILIATION POLICIES

In the case of work-family reconciliation policies, the gender mainstreaming strategy entails abandoning the idea that women are the only ones who have problems combining their work and personal lives. This leads the stress to shift to men as agents of change. What can be said about the impact of these policies?

The experiences and reflections accumulated throughout the past ten years reveals the limits of legislation on matters of work-family reconciliation (Bettio, 1998; Daly-Lewis, 2000; León, 2002; Torns, 2005). It seems that legal regulation has reached its ceiling, that of cultural resistance. This happened because the orientation of these policies -parental leaves, care services and aid- have focused on making it easier to perform household-family work without taking into account their unequal distribution between men and women. There are two consequences to this inequality: first, it affects women's chance to participate in the job market, and secondly, it has negative repercussions on men's commitment to domestic work and care for dependent persons.

In this domain, the case of the more advanced states on matters of equal opportunities is quite relevant, since the

legal guarantees and female influx into the workplace have not been enough to overcome the cultural resistances to the change in gender rules and values (Kröger, 2004). The paradigmatic example can be found in the Scandinavian countries (Borchorst i Siim, 1996). There, the percentage that parental leave of absence actually used is still much higher amongst mothers than fathers. Additionally, the female employment rate in the services sector is higher than that of men. These data show that there is still a mindset linking certain abilities to the female and male identities.

The male breadwinner model/housewife keeper model assigns responsibilities according to sex, which entails the social construction of a male and female identity which is in turn conveyed through the process of socialisation. Empirical evidence of this differential socialisation based on gender is difficult to observe; however, its consequences are easy to tally. The limits of work-family reconciliation policies are a fine example of this.

1.2. THE LIMITS OF WORK-FAMILY RECONCILIATION: SOME EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

Despite the national differences linked to the degree to which the welfare state is developed, along with the cultural traditions of each country, statistics on education, labour and the use of time display the same limit: the broad social

legitimacy of the male breadwinner model. Although this model no longer corresponds to the real life of many women and men, gender inequalities still endure in the division of the total workload. This is proven by statistical data¹:

- The male employment rate is higher than the female: 71.2% of men are employed, compared to 56.3% of women.
 - The unemployment rate is the inverse: 9.6% of women are unemployed compared to 7.6% of men.
 - Workplace segregation -both vertical and horizontal- endures, as does gender-based salary discrimination.
 - Women work much more in public enterprise and the services sector and occupations related to caring for people.
 - Men predominate in private enterprise and technical and technological occupations.
 - Women have a lesser presence and fewer chances to enter professionally recognised sectors and executive-level positions.
- There are inequalities in the time spent on remunerated work and domestic work and care work.
 - The female part-time employment rate is higher than the male rate: 32.6% for women versus 7.3% for men.
 - The average number of hours people prefer to work per week situates females at 30 hours and males at 36 hours.
 - Women spend more time on domestic work and care than men: the national differences appear to be more related to a greater use of services than greater participation by men.
 - In the Scandinavian countries, women spend 3.5 hours per day and men 2.2 hours per day on domestic work.
 - In the UK, Hungary, Belgium and France, there is a greater gender disparity, with around 4.3 hours per day for women and 2.3 for men.
 - Italian and Spanish women spend the most time on domestic work, almost 5 hours per day, while Italian and Spanish men are the ones to spend the least time on this work, at around 1.4 hours per day.
 - In all Member States women have less free time than men.

¹ Data taken from Eurostat from the 2005 European averages:

http://epp.eurostat.ec.eu.int/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-NK-06-004/EN/KS-NK-06-004-EN.PDF

- Women aged 20 to 49 with children under the age of 12 have a lower employment rate, from 75% to 60%.
- Men aged 20 to 49 with children under the age of 12 maintain the same employment rate.
- Part-time work is more frequent among women with children, while for men the percentage remains steady.

The data show how gender roles and stereotypes are being maintained in the division of labour, while their theoretical underpinning states that women's and men's status in the household realm conditions their participation in the job market. Inasmuch as the responsibility for household chores and caretaking falls mainly on women, their possibilities for joining the workforce are limited (Maruani-Rogerat-Torns, 2002). Additionally, they find themselves immersed in a twofold presence system in which they accumulate work and family responsibilities in an attempt to reconcile work and family. This reality serves to highlight the shortcomings in real equality and shows how the socially accepted discourse does not dovetail with people's everyday reality.

2. SOCIALISATION AND EDUCATION

2.1 SOME CONCEPTUAL POINTS

There are a multitude of voices claiming that socialisation, and consequently education, are the keys to bridging this gap separating formal equality from real equality between women and men in welfare societies. To date, the vast majority of work-family reconciliation policies have been limited to facilitating women's entry into the job market, and to a lesser extent, to encouraging men to participate more actively in the household realm. However, they have done this without bearing in mind the differentiating effects of the socialisation process. Emphasising this process is crucial to ensuring greater involvement by men in household chores and care of dependent persons. Some conceptual points are:

- The gender perspective recalls that inequalities between men and women are the result of a different socialisation process based on gender and thus that they do not arise from innate biological differences.
- From the gender perspective, primary socialisation is when individuals acquire the basic elements of their gender identity, while secondary socialisation confirms and legitimises the adoption of that identity and

adherence to pre-established gender roles (Brullet, 1996).

- Gender roles and stereotypes are the pillars of gender socialisation. Through them, boys and girls are assigned the norms, roles, expectations and social spaces for male and female identity.
- The collective patriarchal consciousness attributes qualities and attributes to men and women that are inherent to their sex and that entail different ways of living and thinking in their everyday lives. As a result, from an intergenerational standpoint, socialisation for production is a male characteristic and socialisation for reproduction is the backbone of female life.

Several studies show how currently, behaviour patterns are changing more quickly amongst girls than boys. Girls have broader, more diverse and contradictory life plans than boys, while for boys, their life plans remain focused almost exclusively on full availability for work (Tarrés, 2002). Females' dual adherence, both productive and reproductive, will lead them to live in a permanent system of twofold presence that they could scarcely imagine.

Amongst the young generations, boys and girls share the collective consciousness of equal opportunities.

Equal access to university degrees thus makes them believe this. However, once they enter adulthood, many women discover the hidden facet of this notion: the dual adherence, both productive and reproductive, which will condition their entire lifetime and do so in both their workplace and their personal lives.

First, they will come upon not formal yet real difficulties when choosing certain professional options. Sexist discrimination in school does not result in lower educational attainment, rather in a devaluation of professional options. Secondly, when they acquire affective stability, they will most likely take on greater responsibilities for domestic work and care work than their partners.

One of the concepts that best explains this difference in female and male identity is the **hidden curriculum**. This term refers to the entire set of norms, attitudes, expectations, beliefs and practices that are unconsciously taught in institutions and in the hegemonic culture (Santos Guerra, 1996). It is a mechanism that explains the lack of awareness as to the transmission of the patriarchal culture's implicit norms and values. Beyond content, it highlights the importance of social relations as a factor explaining the process through which gender is socially constructed.

The consequences of this hidden curriculum results in the different ways boys and girls organise experience,

structure spaces, articulate time, establish relations and perform tasks, differences which condition their life plans.

Given the characteristics of this hidden curriculum, it should be understood that the primary socialising agents are not aware of it; consequently, they do not have the resources and training needed to combat gender stereotypes and roles. Or, if they are already aware of it, they can generate tension with the norms and values transmitted by other agents: contradictions between what is taught at home and what is seen on the television, or between what is learned at school and what grandparents tell. So, if we want to intervene in this frame it is necessary, firstly, to know the characteristics of each socialisation agents and, secondly, to know their main resources.

2.2. THE SOCIALISATION AGENTS

The family realm

It is where the socialisation process begins. The attitudes of parents can mediate the traditional gender roles in their children's construction of identity. Often families have placed their hopes for the equality of their sons and daughters in the hands of formal education and have forgotten about the informal upbringing that takes place inside the home (Valiente, 1997). Along these lines, many different studies

underscore the importance of family lifestyle over the structural variables that the mother and father define. For example, it appears that relations with one's own gender, father with son and mother with daughter, reinforces roles, while relations with the opposite sex can contribute to diminishing stereotypes. For this reason, we must bear in mind the influence of the following:

- Behaviours and responsibilities that are taken on by and attributed to the different members of the household.
- Different treatment of children according to their sex, conveyed through games, clothing, activities and chores assigned to them.
- Intergenerational relations through which the traditional gender roles and stereotypes are reproduced.
- The language used to communicate within the household.
- The use and distribution of household space.

The educational realm

It can be regarded as one of the most egalitarian realms of socialisation. However, it should be borne in mind that it still values and considers important certain knowledge and wisdom that are

rooted in an androcentric tradition. Inasmuch as this is true, gender roles and stereotypes are conveyed and consolidated. Experts remind us that beyond the statistical data that highlight the increasing presence of women in all university degree programmes, it is important to remember that discrimination has changed form but not content (Subirats, 1999; Solsona, 2002). Currently, sexism is not manifested in overall access to education nor in academic performance, rather more subtly through the hidden curriculum. Along these lines, it should be borne in mind that:

- Coeducation schools are not educating schools; explicit bread is needed with identifying school content and maleness.
- The influence of the presence and absence of men and women teachers according to the educational level and subjects.
- The preponderance of the male model and androcentric contents in school subjects.
- The language used to communicate inside the classroom.
- The use and distribution of school space.
- The organisation and dynamisation of schools.

- The underlying values that are conveyed in games and extracurricular activities.

Informal education

It refers to non-academic education in values and other knowledge offered and received outside school. It is usually transmitted through entities, associations and organisations that provide free-time activities, sports or training for children. One of the clearest examples of the importance of informal education in the reproduction of gender roles and stereotypes is the segregation found in sports. As is obvious, this realm is not impervious to the hidden curriculum, and here the same factors should be borne in mind as in the realm of education.

Religion

Speaking about traditional values inevitably entails speaking about the role of religion as a socialising agent. In this sense, it is necessary to bear in mind the inherent characteristics of every national context. For example, the separation between religion and state in France turns this issue in a practically sterile matter, unlike the situation in non-secular states. We must also bear in mind that the increase in migratory movements within Europe has sketched a new context characterised by religious pluralism. Within this context, the emerging challenge requires us to find a balance between religious tradition, culture and

social changes. In the case at hand, we must consider:

- To what extent does religion reproduce gender stereotypes and roles?
- Why does religion, an institution with enormous influence, not take on greater responsibility for gender questions?

The media

It is one of the main socialisation institutions in western society as it plays a key role in creating, modifying and eliminating values and ways of thinking and living. For this reason, it must be taken into account if we wish to influence the reproduction of sexist roles and stereotypes. Many different studies prove its influence in the process of child socialisation and lambaste advertising as one of the realms where sexism is most often conveyed (Fernández, 2001). Some factors to bear in mind along these lines are:

- The use of stereotyped language.
- The presence and absence of stereotyped images of women, along with violent and pornographic images.
- Gender sensitivity in programming policies.

- The coverage of women in the news.
- The number of women working in the communications sector, the positions they hold in terms of decision-making.
- Women's access to the new information and communication technologies.

3. CHALLENGES

The social changes taking place in western societies require us to rethink the roles of both men and women within both the public and private domains. However, to what extent do these changes imply a crisis in the male breadwinner model?

There are a variety of approaches when answering this question. For example, along the lines of the French experience, the ongoing sexual segregation in the labour market highlights the persistence of the symbolic weight of this model. First, women continue to occupy the worst positions within the job market and remain concentrated in the services sector. Secondly, people who use these services do not seem to be willing to accept attention from male workers and express greater confidence in the attention given by female workers, which obliges us to wonder to what extent modern-day society is prepared for both

women and men to work in all the employment sectors.

This issue is undoubtedly one of the major challenges of 21st century Western societies, especially if we take into account the fact that the current social changes lead education, health care and social services to emerge as three economic sectors that are keys to the future of these welfare societies. For example, demographic trends prognosticate a progressive ageing of the population and thus an increase in jobs within the sectors of personal services and care for dependent persons. Within this context, a twofold question arises:

- Would men want to hold these jobs alongside women?
- Would society accept being cared for by both men and women?

The current situation tells us that for the time being, women are the ones who continue to heal society's wounds. We will have to wait for some years to find out whether all of us are capable of balancing this social responsibility between men and women.

Both situations require men to rethink their attitudes towards certain key factors in their everyday reality: the distribution of power within the home; their children's upbringing; individuals' autonomy; controlling one's feelings and

physical force. At this juncture we must ask ourselves:

- How can men deal with the lack of male role models?
- What can we do on a local level to help them?

Despite these men's desire to change, it is difficult to talk about the end of Western patriarchy especially if we bear in mind that their predisposition to change arises within a crisis of social role models for their identity. Perhaps the existence of these male groups proves the need to explain to men that the male breadwinner model is not in their interest. To accomplish this, the local dimension becomes the ideal frame.

On the other hand, the weight that traditional values have during socialisation generation after generation explains why cultural tradition is perceived as something natural. Perhaps we must consider:

- To what extent must traditional values be preserved?
- How can we intervene to change cultural norms?

CONCLUSIONS

The recommendations in this section build on the outcomes of the Genderwise project which was a Urbact project lead by Qec-Eran to support the development of integrated Local and Regional Action Plans for Gender Equality, with a specific focus on developing and promoting the role of men as change agents in the reconciliation of work and family life.

Genderwise was implemented from January 2006 to February 2007 and involved 12 partners from 8 European countries. Among the outcomes, it produced an [online policy and practice "market place"](#) (Agora Praxis) presenting all the partners presentations and project case studies in order to capitalise on existing practice at local, national and European level. All the material and documents related to this project can be found at http://www.qec-eran.org/projects/Genderwise_index.htm

As a conclusion some suggestions can be highlighted to enable further action that can help changing gender stereotypes in education and socialization.

It seems necessary to cooperate with the competent authorities in two levels:

Political decision makers and authorities that are in charge of education and training:

- Review national curricula at all levels and ensure not only the integration of gender equality aspects as a cross-cutting issue.
- Include in it specific issue focusing on a more equal distribution of care and other unpaid work at home in teachers' training and continuing education.
- Promoting media campaigns.

Local dimension that facilitates proximity and social participation:

- Promoting local campaigns that make the social importance of domestic work and care work visible, as well as the need to redistribute these tasks amongst women and men. They should be a dual objective: to generate debate and to raise awareness.
- Promoting workshops for local agents aimed at questioning the socially attributed gender roles and promoting the use of non-sexist language in the local public administration.
- Promoting coeducational projects throughout innovation pedagogy and fostering the spread and exchange of coeducational inter-school experiences.

- Promoting the organization of centers to coordinate non-sexist education from local scale and promoting training for teachers and educational administrators as agents for advancing coeducation.
- Consider kindergartens and schools places where women and men can meet to learn new

gender roles and to “un-learn” stereotypes and attitudes that hamper progress towards a society which values and needs the full potential of both women and men.

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5.2 LINKS

GENERAL

- <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/media.htm>
About Gender and the media
- <http://www.trinity.edu/%7Emkearl/gender.html>
It's a portal about women's studies

- http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.phpURL_ID=23023&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html
UNESCO report
- <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/routledg/cgee;jsessionid=83wy90wdjf4v.alice>
It's a very interesting magazine about Gender and Education

MEN'S ISSUES LINKS

- <http://www.achillesheel.freeuk.com/>
It's a bi-annual magazine for men which is intended to be a forum for discussion of men and masculinity, and a reflection of the diverse and developing ways in which men are experiencing themselves today.
- <http://www.ifi.uio.no/~eivindr/iasom/index.htm>
IASOM: The International Association for Studies of Men
- [The World Wide Web Virtual Library:](#)
The Men's Issues Page his mission is to cover the several men's movements *encyclopedically*.
- <http://www.vix.com/menmag/wherego.html>
Questions about the future direction of the Men's Movement
- <http://www.umn.edu/~mincava/bibs/bibmen.htm>
Men Who Batter: A Selected Bibliography
- <http://www.sagepub.co.uk/journals/details/j0244.html>
Men and Masculinities is a new journal committed to publishing interdisciplinary research in masculinities studies.
- <http://www.xyonline.net/mensbiblio/>
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QEC-EUROPEAN REGENERATION AREAS NETWORK
RUE VIEUX MARCHÉ AUX GRAINS 48,1000 BRUSSELS
TEL: +32 2 524 45 45, FAX: +32 2 524 44 31
E-MAIL: INFO@QEC-ERAN.ORG WEB: WWW.QEC-ERAN.ORG