

S.N. Burova

GENDER

STEREOTYPES

IN UNIVERSITY

ENVIRONMENT

OF MINSK



**GENDER STEREOTYPES
IN UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT OF MINSK**

Minsk «Unipack» 2015

GENDER STEREOTYPES IN UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT OF MINSK

*Burova S.N.,
Associate Professor,
Department of Sociology Belarusian State University,
Candidate of Sciences in Law,
Member of the National Council on Gender Policy
under the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus*

UDC 378 : 305 (476) (047.3)

BBC 74. 58 (4Бел)

B 92

Preparation of this publication is organized by Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law within the framework of academic cooperation with the Belarusian State University and other institutions of higher education in Belarus. The views expressed in this publication are the thoughts and opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Institute.

The report presents results of a study on prevalence of gender stereotypes at Minsk universities in 2012, based on a survey of opinions of students and teaching staff. It also considers the role of higher education system in overcoming obsolete gender ideas.

Translation from Russian: Siarhei Bohdan.

ISBN 978-985-6802-69-3

© Raoul Wallenberg Institute, 2015

© Svetlana Burova, 2015

© Design. CJSC «Unipak», 2015

CONTENTS

1		
INTRODUCTION.....		6
2		
Analysis of the results of the gender stereotypes survey based on opinions of young university students in Minsk		8
3		
Analysis of the results of the gender stereotypes survey based on opinions of university faculty members in Minsk		15
4		
A brief comparative analysis of the results of the study of the views of students and faculty members concerning gender stereotypes		22
5		
FINDINGS		26
REFERENCES.....		27

INTRODUCTION

Gender, gender equality, gender stereotypes... Many people quite often hear these strange words, which have recently entered our lexicon, and do not always understand what do they mean. For many, the word «gender» and words derived from its root are just modern and trendy words for «sex» [*pol*] or its derivatives. But it is not so. The sex in its most general form defines a set of genetically determined traits of an individual defining its role in the process of fertilization. That is, it is the sex chromosomes, external and internal sex organs, hormones, which enable us to establish who is a woman and who is a man. The gender, however, is manifested in behavior that is consistent with the notions what is right / wrong or normal / abnormal for a particular sex. Traditionally, the male and the female have always been considered as opposite and complementary to one another. At the same time, it was not taken into account that the existing notions of the male and the female in different geopolitical spaces differed and changed in the course of history. The twentieth century proved to be an era of profound social and political transformations when natural differences between men and women had been questioned. It became clear that women and men have a lot in common, and many manifest differences [between them] were caused by social and economic factors. Hence, the existing discriminatory practices and inequalities between women and men are the result of the impact of socio-economic circumstances.

Gender stereotypes are «generalized notions and beliefs formed in a particular culture about how really men and women behave. The emergence of gender stereotypes is caused by historical emergence of a model of gender relations which placed sex differences over the individual ones, i.e., the qualitative differences of individual men and women»[1]. According to beliefs popular in our society the woman represents the «weaker sex», forever being the so called hearth's guardian, and her ultimate purpose is motherhood; the man represents a «stronger sex», being protector and breadwinner. So, these notions are examples of gender stereotypes. That is, these are certain patterns that restrict personal self-realization, because they «drive» people into a certain normative framework, going beyond which threatens to end for an individual in landing her or him in a group of «non-women» or «not-men».

Gender discrimination involve «actions which prevent members of a group defined on the basis of their sex or gender identity, access to resources or sources of income». [2]

Gender equality is the equality of rights and opportunities of men and women, including access to resources. This is the goal that has been set by our state in mid-1990s. The movement towards it is a long and very difficult path which must be equipped with a road map and the necessary mechanisms for the movement. And, of course, we need people who will provide the energy for the movement, will be the energizers that go ahead and lead the whole society in the right direction.

Continuing this analogy, let's notice the fact that the movement towards gender equality will be successful only when those walking along this hard and long path

understand where and why they are going. And what the achievement of this goal – a society of gender equality – will bring them? Such ideal societies do not yet exist. To date, Scandinavian countries have achieved the best results in attainment of gender equality as they have a high level of social protection and efficient economies, and created conditions for the greatest self-realization in all areas for all people. Beginning already since mid-1970s, the states of the region are actively pursuing policies which aimed at removing gender stereotypes, creation of equal conditions for both parents to care for and educate their children from the very early age. Not only mothers but also fathers received the right to a leave for child care. For men, it is not only the right but also the duty. And many of them realized what a joy it is to be a real father, to spend time with your own child, watch his or her growth and development. Women also got more opportunities for self-fulfillment outside the home.

The system of higher education is one of the channels and tools that are designed to influence the outlook of youth, change established norms, disseminate new knowledge and views on gender relations so that both sexes have the opportunity for a more complete self-fulfillment. And the young students themselves can become the bearers of new gender images which have overcome the limitations of stereotypes.

Aim of Study:

To elucidate the issues of gender stereotypes prevalence in the universities of Minsk.

Tasks:

- To analyze the prevalence of gender stereotypes in the university environment, based on the opinions of students and faculty members of universities in Minsk;
- To conduct a brief comparative analysis of the results of studying the views of students and faculty members on issues of gender stereotypes.

Short description of the study

A study of students and faculty members through a questionnaire survey was conducted as a part of the project in April - June 2012 in the three universities in Minsk: BSU – Faculty of Law and the Faculty of International Relations; BNTU – Faculty of Management Technologies and Humanization; BSEU – Faculty of Law. In total, 600 students were covered by the survey, 200 people at each university on the three courses [years of studies], the number of surveyed young women and men was equal – 100 persons of each sex at each university. As a result, 300 students and 300 students have been interviewed in the first, second and third courses [years of studies] of four faculties [departments] in these universities.

In the same universities, 139 lecturers and professors have been interviewed, including in the BSU at the Faculty of Law – 44 persons (or 31.7%) and at the Faculty of International Relations – 25 persons (or 18.0% of the respondents); in the BNTU at the Faculty of Management Technologies and Humanization – 50 persons (or 36% of the respondents); in the BSEU at the Faculty of Law – 20 persons (or 14.4% of the respondents). Among the respondents, women make up 45.3%, and men 54.7%.

Analysis of the results of the gender stereotypes survey based on opinions of young university students in Minsk

Gender stereotypes relate to professional and family activities, character qualities of women and men. Let's first consider the attitude of young students to certain **stereotypes about women**.

Female qualities

It is believed that *«young women are more diligent and hardworking than young men»*. Most respondents (62.7%) tend to believe that this is a correct judgment. The female students, however, agree with this statement more frequently than the male students (by 16%). A strong stereotype is associated with the ability to drive a car. More than a half of all respondents believe that *«women drive a car worse than men»*. One is struck by the sharp contrast in the responses of female and male students. 29% of young women and 82% of young men (i.e., overwhelming majority number of young men) think so. Since the statistics of traffic violations do not prove that women drive a car worse, therefore the male opinions are obviously built on prejudices. Moreover, in this age in Belarus many male and female students do not have yet cars and drivers license, so their opinions are usually not connected with their own experience.

There is quite a common stereotype that *«the main purpose of the woman is to be sexually attractive»*. And one in four respondents has agreed with this. The result is surprising because all these people are getting their higher education and acquiring some professional qualification. But this opinion implies that all this is secondary to the woman. The perennial question arises, *«So, why a young woman is studying at the university and acquiring a professional qualification, if her mission is in some other realm?»* However, there is a difference in the number of young men and women that display this stereotype: male students think so two times more frequently than female students.

Stereotypes in the family sphere

It is traditionally believed that the *«children - it's mostly the mother's concern»*. The number of young men and women who disagree with this judgment is about the same (about 62%). In this case we see a reinterpretation of role positions of both sexes in the family. The representatives of the younger generation who are getting higher education in metropolitan universities today often believe that the children shall be a common concern of mothers and fathers. However, more than a third of both sexes still agree that the education of children is mainly the duty of the mother. No gender differences in quantitative distribution of those holding such views were revealed.

Professional domain and combination of professional and family roles

Against the background of declaration by our state of equal rights to work and pay for men and women, and almost universal employment of women outside the home, about a third of the respondents agree with the statement that *«the wife must not earn more than her husband»* – 30.5% (female students agree with the statement almost two times less frequently than male students: women – 21.3; men – 39.7). Such public opin-

ion of young students corresponds to the real situation in our country. The average wage of Belarusian women makes up about 70% of men's wage. Despite all the injustice of this situation, many people think that it should be so.

This anachronism is associated with an unconditional acceptance of the traditional (patriarchal) leading man's role – the role of breadwinner. It is the man, – (not a woman, and not the two of them) – who should earn money for the family. The logic, apparently, is that if the husband does not earn money or earns less than his wife, he cannot cope with this role, he «falls short» of what it makes to be «a real man». He «falls in the eyes» of the woman. However, in this case too, the men in their views look more archaic than women. The female students disagree with this statement two times less frequently than male students. This corresponds well with the following statement about women's economic independence. Namely, almost the same positions happen to exist in relation to the statement that «*if a woman is economically independent, it is unlikely that she will have a successful personal life*» – about a quarter of all respondents agree with this statement. Young women think so two times less frequently than young men. It is apparently implied that a successful career of a woman hampers her happiness in her personal life, «women's happiness» which is apparently implied to be connected with serving a man («the most important is to have the loved man near you»), family and children. An economically independent woman is a woman who earns well and copes with her professional duties, who apparently spends a lot of time working, which significantly reduces her ability to handle family matters, or to spend time with her relatives, and thus deprives her of a successful personal life. It should be noticed that most of the respondents (67.2%) still disagree with this statement. Family and work are not perceived by the majority as a dilemma.

Regarding the professional activities, about a fifth of the respondents displays the stereotype that «*a woman cannot be a good surgeon, a lawyer, a politician*». That is, these are examples of professions in which only the man can reach the top. The gender dimension is also clearly visible here: young men agree with this statement three times more frequently than young women. It shall be emphasised that a positive attitude toward gender segregation in professional realm prevents self-realization of both women and men. We shall underline in passing that the discrepancy of opinions of a rather large proportion of young women and men on family and professional roles of men and women in the future will lead to quarrels and conflicts if the gender roles in a couple will be understood differently.

So, stereotypes about women are rather common among young students, although many of these stereotypes do not prevail. They are displayed more by male than female students. Young women in their views look more modern, men – more traditional. Analysis of the **stereotypes about men** shows that in this case male students are also more conservative in their views than female students.

Men's qualities

This concerns intelligence, responsibility and participation in politics. Most are not inclined to think that «*men are smarter than women*», but among those who think that men are smarter the share of young men is more than 40% higher than the share of young women. At the same time, one third of the respondents believes that «*young men have less responsible attitude to work than young women*» (young women agree with this statement more frequently than men). More than a third (38%) believe that «*politics is a purely male business*». There are two times more young men than women who think so.

Thus, about one-third of students think of men's better mental abilities and their destiny to be politicians.

The stereotype about the men's need to contain their emotions is a very common one. More than a half of the respondents (58.2%) believe that «*a man should be strong and should always conceal his emotions*». However, women are more merciful and not so demanding of men as men of themselves (47.0% of women and 69.3% of men agree with the statement). As we can see, the majority of the students connects the notion of masculinity and male power to the suppression of emotions.

Professional realm

The majority of respondents of both sexes have agreed that «*for a man it is a shame to earn less than a woman*» (73.7%), although among young women this percentage is slightly lower than among men. Attitude to this statement does not accord very well with the attitude to the statement that «*the wife should not earn more than her husband*» (30.5% agree), as discussed previously. Although the stereotype about the «male breadwinner» is quite strong, the idea that the wife may also be the «breadwinner» is taking roots. It is apparently a reflection of what is happening in the minds of people in real life. In Belarus, there are a lot of families where the wife's wage is equal to or even higher than the wage of her husband.

Family sphere

Regarding the participation of men in household chores, the students not so often support a categorical statement that it is not the man's business. Around a fifth of the respondents – 20.8% - agreed with the statement that «*a man should not do household chores*». Among the young women, 12.0% agreed with the statement, and among men – 29.7; i.e., more than two times more. For many years our country is going through an incremental process of rethinking the extent of participation of the male population in housekeeping. Despite some difficulties this process is growing stronger.

So, the young men in their views on their sex and their gender roles are more traditional than the women. Young women impose fewer requirements on young men than the latter do on themselves. However, in general the stereotypes about men circulate no less than the stereotypes about women. However, views on professional success and political activities as a sphere dominated by the masculine prevail both among young men and women. Of course, the former display it more strongly than the latter. Participation of men in housekeeping is perceived as normal by the majority of male and female university students.

The general stereotype: «*Equality of women and men is impossible*». More than a half (52.2%) agree with this statement. Among the women 45.7% support such radical statement, among men there are by 13% more of those who think so, namely 58.7%. Of course, there is a verbal ambiguity in the statement, and some respondents, in our opinion, just did not have enough education. Our experience shows that at the household level, some perceive the notion of equality of sexes as their identity and not as equality of rights and not as gender equality.

The study has also evaluated the **attitude of students to some statements describing the situation in the country and the society.**

Male and female estimates for some items differ significantly. 57.7% of the respondents generally agree with the statement «*men's rights concerning the children after divorce are infringed upon*». There are almost two times more young men than

women who think that men suffer after a divorce because of the children from the annulled marriage. We shall not forget that these are young people, the vast majority of whom were not and are not married and are not parents themselves. They apparently got their idea of infringement of fathers' rights after divorce either from their childhood experiences (if the parents divorced), or from the general mood in society, or from their knowledge of the real situation. In fact, in our country, although the law contains a rule on equal rights and responsibilities of parents in relation to the joint children after the divorce, judicial practice tends to leave the children to live with their mother.

The statement «*women earn less than men*» was supported by 44.5% (w – 33.3; m – 55.7). This statement can be viewed from two perspectives. On the one hand, as the understanding of discrimination against women. On the other hand, it may be associated with the belief that women are inferior workers, and therefore they earn less. As we see, among male students there are by 22.2% more those who agree than among female students. And, most likely, the young men implied that women work less, or less than men, or their work is less important than men's. More than a quarter of the respondents (29.0%) believe that «*now, the position of the man in society becomes more vulnerable, he begins to face discrimination*», but among the young women there are two times less those who agree with that than among young men (w – 18.0; m – 40.0).

Young men and women demonstrate the closest estimates *concerning the difference in opportunities available for men and women in society*. About 44% of the students believe that women have less opportunities (young men and women gave similar estimates). Summing up the results of this cluster of questions, we draw attention to the fact that quite a lot of male and female students believe that now the rights of both women and men are being frequently violated.

The students were asked for their opinions on the statements that are relatively new, which destroy status quo, and which make them to look at the existing gender situation differently. *They can be regarded as a kind of indicator of readiness for change in the existing gender order*. The most pronounced is a new perspective on the role of a man-father. Traditionally, the primary educator of children and the best parent was believed to be the woman. Today, however, the majority of students – 8.7% (approximately the same number of young women and men) agree with the statement that «*men are able to take good care of the children*».

The majority also clearly believes that the woman's life is more difficult because she has to reconcile professional and family roles, having «double time» (work and home). There is a mass understanding that «*for a woman it is harder than for a man to combine work and family responsibilities*». 64.8% (approximately the same number of female and male students) agree with that.

More radical statements were supported by far fewer male and female students:

- 46.5% of the respondents (w – 50.3; m – 42.7) agreed with the statement «it is necessary to stop treating women as weak creatures»;
- 42.8% (w – 62.7; m – 23.0) agreed with the statement «the majority of women are strong personalities»;
- 29.8% (about the same numbers of male and female opinions) agreed with the statement that «it is necessary to teach people from childhood that a woman should be treated in the same way as a man». In our view, the very interpretation of this statement is very ambiguous, one which could affect the attitude towards it.

Among the youth, the female sex indeed still tends to be perceived as the weaker one. As we have already noticed earlier, the vision of women as the «weaker sex» is characteristic for the state as well, and that is confirmed by its paternalistic policies towards women. Because of that, many people perceive women as a vulnerable part of population. On the one hand, today it should be done so, but, on the other hand, it is necessary to create conditions for women to feel and behave as full-fledged and self-sufficient persons. Society of gender equality - it is just such a society. Let's make an assumption that the increasing self-consciousness of women and their ever greater confidence in their abilities and not understanding by men can be a serious challenge of interpersonal gender interaction.

Meanwhile, even the stage of life associated with university studies proves that young women are not inferior to men, nor in their studies nor in their leadership qualities. For example, with regard to the relationship in a student group and leadership in it, the majority believes that *«the opportunity and ability to be a leader in the group do not depend on sex»* – 68.0% (w – 79.7%, m – 56.3%). Those who believe that such a link exists, constitute about a third of the respondents (29.7%). There are two times less young women than men who think so (18.3 and 41.0, respectively). The majority believe that both young women and men equally possess the authority in a student group (59.8%). In cases of taking some common decisions in a student group, according to 63.5% of the respondents, the gender of those participating in the discussion is irrelevant. The rest think that opinion of young men is more important - 18.0% of the total number of the respondents. There are almost four times more young men than women who think so (27.7 and 8.3%, respectively). In other words, a quarter of young men believe in their greater social significance.

The fact that the majority does not consider the sex of other participants to be important while participating in decision making, ensures the normal functioning of a heterogeneous student group.

As noted above, a significant number of surveyed do not agree that gender equality is possible. And often this is due to lack of understanding of what constitutes «gender equality» and what «gender» means. A very simple test checking knowledge on these issues included into the questionnaire has demonstrated that a third of the respondents possess an adequate understanding of «gender» as they answered that it is «the social and cultural characteristics of women and men». The young women understand it more frequently than men (40.7 and 32.7%, respectively).

46.0% of the respondents (w – 50.7, m – 41.3%) gave the correct answer what is «gender equality», namely «equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men». It looks somewhat paradoxical that more people know what gender equality is than what is «gender». The explanation for this fact, in our opinion, has to do with the intuition of the respondents, and not with their sound knowledge. It shall be concluded that ***the lack of knowledge about gender approach and the essence of the state policy of gender equality contributes to the preservation of patriarchal norms of co-existence and outdated gender stereotypes that prevent the fulfilment of personal potential of both women and men.***

Conclusions

1. All students in selected departments of the three universities of Minsk are getting their education in humanities. It is important to emphasize, because our previous studies have shown that the worldviews of students of higher educational

institutions of different profiles often differ. For example, the students of humanities and the students of «technical» specialities have different motivation to learn, their axiosphere differs. Sociologists point out that in the last decades in Belarus education is losing its humanistic function against the background of its increasing importance as an instrumental value. We can assume that the students receiving education in the humanities are more «advanced» in terms of understanding the importance of human rights, building a more humane relations between people in general and between people of different sexes, in particular. It has to do both with the subjective choice of future profession they made and with curricula of respective departments. Therefore, the data obtained, in our opinion, reflect the views of the most advanced part of the Belarusian youth in terms of understanding the value of humanization of relations between people.

2. The aspiration for equality between men and women as a social phenomenon divides college students into two almost equal parts. The first one, with a predominant amount of the young men believes that this is impossible. The second part is thinking that it is possible, and there are more young women among those who think so.
3. The stereotypes about women are quite common among young students, although many of them do not dominate. They are more frequently displayed by male than female students. Young women in their views look more modern, men – more traditional.
4. The young men in their views on their sex and their gender roles are more traditional than women in their respective views. Young women impose fewer requirements on young men than the latter on themselves. Yet in general, gender stereotypes about men are not less prevalent than gender stereotypes about women. Views on professional success and political activities as a sphere dominated by masculine dominate both among young men and women. Of course, they are more pronounced among the former. Today, men's involvement in housekeeping is perceived as normal by the majority of male and female university students. For many years our country is going through an incremental process of rethinking the extent of participation of the male population in housekeeping. Not without difficulty, but this process is the growing trend.
5. Among the students there are certain indicators of readiness for change in the gender discourse. The most pronounced is a new perspective on the role of a man-father. The vast majority of male and female students believe that men can take good care of the children. The majority also clearly believes that woman's life is more difficult because she has to combine professional and family roles. Yet the statement that it is necessary to stop treating women as weak creatures and that the majority of women are strong personalities was supported by less than a half of the respondents. Among the youth, the female sex indeed still tends to be perceived as the weaker one. In our opinion, the increasing self-consciousness of young women and their ever greater confidence in their abilities and young men's failure to understand that can be a serious challenge of interpersonal gender interaction.
6. The majority of respondents of both sexes believe that the opportunity and ability to be a leader in a student group does not depend on gender.
7. It looks somewhat paradoxical that more people know what gender equality is than what is «gender». The explanation for this fact, in our opinion, has to do

more with the intuition of the respondents, rather than with their knowledge. It shall be concluded that the lack of knowledge about gender approach and the essence of the state policy of gender equality contributes to the preservation of patriarchal norms of co-existence and outdated gender stereotypes that prevent the fulfilment of personal potential of both women and men.

Analysis of the results of the gender stereotypes survey based on opinions of university faculty members in Minsk

The questions regarding gender stereotypes and judgments about the situation of women and men in modern Belarusian society were identical for college students and faculty members. First, we consider evaluations of stereotypes about women.

Women's qualities

Perseverance and hard work are considered typical of women. Most lecturers and professors (68.1%) tend to believe that *«young women are more diligent and hard-working than men»*. Female lecturers and professors slightly more often agree with this judgment than male lecturers and professors (by 6%). A strong stereotype is associated with estimating the ability of people of different sexes to drive a car. A third of all respondents (35.5%) believe that *«women drive a car worse than men do»*. One is struck by the sharp contrast in the responses of women and men (w – 25.9%, m – 47.1%, i.e. men are two times more likely to agree with this statement). We have already emphasised that the statistics of traffic violations do not confirm the fact that women drive a car worse, therefore the views, especially held by men, of women as driving a car worse – are obviously based on prejudice.

So, what the woman should be proud of? What is her main value? 15.2% of lecturers and professors covered by the survey (w – 10.3; m – 17.1, i.e., almost one in ten of the women interviewed, and every sixth man) agreed with the statement *«the main purpose of women is to be sexually attractive»*. Of course, it's not so much. But we shall remember that we are talking about instructors of higher educational institutions who train specialists, professionals. If they at the same time think that biological properties are still more important for the woman, then they also appropriately build their relationships with young women at the higher educational institution. We have already discussed it in the previous section. Is it not the reason why, according to a certain part of young students, lecturers and professors of both sexes have to young women more lenient attitude than to men, they make more concessions to young women, give them higher marks, etc.? Apparently, the existence of outdated gender stereotypes affects the learning process, the relationship to the students. In our society today, sexuality as the quality of the woman often becomes a fetish, gets a fatal significance, becomes her main value.

The stereotype concerning the family

A quarter of all teachers covered by the survey (26.1%) agree with the statement that *«children is mostly mother's concern»*. At the same time, female lecturers and professors thought so much less often than male lecturers and professors (w – 19.0 m – 31.4%). The majority of lecturers and professors of both sexes do not share this opinion.

Combining professional and family roles

The overwhelming majority of respondents disagreed with the statement that *«if a woman is economically independent, it is unlikely that she will have a successful personal*

life». However, the number of those who agreed is not low – 22.5% (almost the same number of men and women). The idea about some specific woman's happiness associated with the personal life is apparently equally widespread among the different age and social groups of the population of our country. Economic independence of a woman seems to these people to be a major threat to her personal well-being. Being dependent on a man (husband, partner), according to this category of people, is the sine qua non of success in her personal relationship. It would be useful to recall here the problem of domestic violence against women. As our research shows, most frequently these are women which are economically dependent on their husbands who become the victims of all kinds of domestic violence. [5]

The statement *«if a woman is economically independent, it is unlikely that she will have a successful personal life»*, agrees well with the statement that *«the wife must not earn more than her husband»*. The latter statement is supported by 14.6% of lecturers and professors, almost the same numbers of women and men. Note that there are several times more those who disagree with the statement than those who agree. However, if there is a bias in this highly educated population group, then it is possible to make an assumption that among other categories of citizens and residents of Belarus it is more widespread. What, after all, will remain of the man's values if he suddenly stops being proud of his higher than woman's wages? And really, should women love only those men who earn more than them? If we follow this logic, then the woman should always remain in the captivity of her economic dependence on men, love only those men who earn more than she, and who can provide for her. That is, we shall put at the forefront of gender relations the material (economic) factor that separates men and women into different, unequal in their economic potential groups, from the very beginning undermining the basis for social egalitarianism and gender equality, also in the process of propagation of an egalitarian model of family life.

Against the background of declaring by the state of equal rights to work and pay for men and women, and almost universal employment of women outside the home, 14.5% of the questioned lecturers and professors (almost the same number of women and men) agree with the statement that *«the wife should not earn more than her husband»*. The anachronism exists in relation with the unconditional acceptance by certain population groups of the leading traditional (patriarchal) male role – the role of the breadwinner. This is consistent with the statement about the economic dependence of women.

Professional division of labour, existence of *«male and female professions»* are attributes of a patriarchal society. Every tenth respondent of the teaching staff – 10.1% (w – 6.9; m – 12.9) – shares the belief that *«a woman cannot be a good surgeon, lawyer, politician»*. These are examples of the professions in which, according to the existing views still held by a certain part of the population, only a man can traditionally reach the top. We emphasize that a positive attitude in higher educational institutions to gender segregation and outdated gender stereotypes in the professional sphere hinder fulfillment of both women and men (who are *«ashamed»* to work in *«female areas»*). After all, it is not the absence/presence of certain natural abilities of women (and men) but the cultural, social and economic factors that interfere with their self-discovery and self-realization.

So, the stereotypes about women are quite common among lecturers and professors of both sexes, although many of them do not dominate. They are displayed to a greater

extent by men than women. Female lecturers and professors in their judgments look more modern, teachers – more traditional.

Stereotypes about men

Men's qualities

The majority is not inclined to think that «men are smarter than women». Among a fifth of those who agree, i.e., those who think that men are more intelligent, there are two times more male than female lecturers and professors. A third of surveyed teachers of both sexes said that *«young men have less responsible attitude than women»* (women and men gave very similar estimates). A quarter of the respondents (23.2%) believe that *«politics is a purely male affair»*. However, there are almost two times fewer women than men who think so. These judgments look as if they are in opposition to each other. The question arises: If the men (boys) have less responsible attitude to business, and they are not as smart as the stereotype goes, then why politics is exclusively their business? Can irresponsible people indeed engage in it? The answers given by men appear illogical more frequently than women's responses.

The stereotype about the need to deter men's emotions is a very common one. Half of the respondents believe that *«a man should be strong and always conceal his emotions»*. The female lecturers and professors, however, are more loyal and not so demanding towards men as the men to themselves (agree with the statement: f – 31.0; m – 65.7). The majority of all generations of men link the concept of masculinity and male power with suppression of emotions and restraint. This gender norm has deep social roots and results in dire consequences. Since childhood, boys are taught that they need to suppress their emotions, «If you're a man, you shall not cry or complain, you must be strong». However, such a setting threatens both physical and mental health of men. Psychologists have proved that repressed emotions do not disappear, they accumulate their charge as if in a steam boiler which eventually explodes. Perhaps it is the constant suppression of their feelings that is the main cause of numerous cardiovascular diseases, alcohol abuse, and ultimately lower life expectancy of men compared to women.

Professional roles

Analysis of the stereotypes about men shows that male lecturers and professors are more conservative than women in their views. Half of the respondents of both sexes agreed that *«it is a shame for the man to earn less than the woman does»*. The man shall be the main breadwinner – this conviction today dominates in our society.

Family roles

As far as the participation of men in household chores is concerned, the lecturers and professors rather rarely agreed with the statement that *«a man should not do household chores»* (only 6.5%). Among women, those who agree with this statement make up 3.4% and among men – 8.6%; i.e., more than two times more. These results pleasantly surprised us. They demonstrate to which extent the overwhelming majority of intellectuals are rethinking the injustice of the fact that housekeeping is done only by women.

So, the male lecturers and professors in their views on their sex and their gender roles are more traditional than their female colleagues. The women impose on men fewer requirements than the latter do on themselves. In general the stereotypes about men circulate no less than the stereotypes about women. Views on professional success

and social position of sexes are more stereotyped than the views on men's participation in housekeeping. The latter is perceived as something normal by the overwhelming majority of the lecturers and professors.

General stereotype

About a half of the respondents agree with the statement that «*equality between women and men is unattainable*». Among the women 58.6% and among men 40.0% support such absolute position. Again, because the wording of the statement contains a linguistic ambiguity, and at the everyday life level, some people perceive the notion of equality of genders as their identity and not as equality, and it could have affected the responses.

The attitude toward equality between men and women as a social phenomenon is dividing the teaching staff into two parts. The first part, in which women predominate, believes that this is impossible. The second part is thinking that this is possible, and men make up the majority of those who agree [with the statement].

Assessment of the situation in the country

Men's and women's views on some issues significantly differ. The lecturers and professors of both sexes display the closest to each other opinions as they estimate earnings of men and women. The majority of respondents of both sexes – 64.5% – agreed with the statement «*Women earn less than men*». The opinions of whether «*men and women have different opportunities in society*» are not so unanimous. Overall, 68.3% of lecturers and professors believe that women have fewer opportunities than men; among women the share of those who agree with that statement makes up 69.0%, among men – 60.0% of respondents.

Men now began to think about gender discrimination against them. The statement «*the right of men to children after the divorce are infringed upon*» was supported by 58.0% of all respondents (w – 48.3; m – 65.7). As we see, there are by almost 20% more men than women who agree with this statement. The statement «*man's position in society is currently becoming more vulnerable, he starts to face discrimination*» was supported by 8.6% of women and 22.9% of men. We shall underline the big difference in the responses of men and women.

64.5% of the lecturers and professors surveyed have agreed with the statement that «*women earn less than men*» (almost the same number of men and women). This can be seen from different angles. First, this may indicate an understanding of injustice and discrimination against women. Secondly, it may imply that women work worse, and therefore earn less. Thirdly, it is the knowledge of the real situation without judgment about values. And most likely women and men will explain it differently.

Summing up the results of this cluster of questions, we underline that some of the lecturers and professors believe that at present the rights of both women and men are frequently violated.

Teachers were also asked about their acceptance of relatively new statements which undermine the status quo. These are the statement which make them to look at the current situation in a different way. ***They can be regarded as a kind of indicator of readiness for change in the gender order.***

The most pronounced is the positive view on the family-related abilities of man-father. The vast majority of lecturers and professors believe that «*men know how to take good care of the children*» (83.3), while the men agree with this more often than the

women do. For the majority (78.3) it is also completely clear that «*the life of the woman is more difficult because she has to combine professional and family roles*» (however, among those who agree with that opinion there are more women than men: 82.8 and 72.9%, respectively). These figures, in our view, generally demonstrate a good understanding of the situation in Belarus.

The statement that «*it is necessary to stop treating women as weak creatures*» was supported by less than a half of respondents – 39.7% of women and 47.1% of men. It somehow contradicts the opinion expressed by a bigger share of the respondents that «most women are strong personality». In total, 32.6% of respondents agreed that «most women are strong personalities». 46.6% of female lecturers and professors and 17.1% of their male colleagues agreed with this statement.

Less than one in three respondents (31.2%) agreed with the statement that «it is necessary to learn since childhood to treat women in the same way as men». At the same women lecturers and professors gave this response in 27.6% of cases, and men – in 37.1%. Again, attention is drawn to the ambiguity of the interpretation of the statement which could affect the attitude towards it. This is the case when different interpretations by researchers and respondents may affect the findings. But in any case, in our opinion, **in this environment of lecturers and professors the male part looks more gender sensitive than the female one**. Some of the previous answers also indicate this.

What is the attitude of lecturers and professors towards gender equality? It is no secret that in our society, even among highly educated people there is no clear understanding of gender mainstreaming and its essence. In the gender studies themselves not everything is yet settled, there are many methodological and theoretical issues that require discussion and reflection. Therefore, we did not expect 100 percent of correct answers to questions about what is «gender» and what is «gender equality», even from this enlightened part of the population. The most correct answer what is «gender» was given by little more than a third of lecturers and professors surveyed. Paradoxically, when asked what is «gender equality», significantly more respondents (79.1%) answered correctly.

On the basis of their knowledge, the respondents have tried to assess the level of gender equality in institutions of higher education of the Republic of Belarus. It was possible to evaluate it as low, medium or high. About a quarter honestly admitted that they had not thought about this issue. Among those who did not think on this issue, there were almost two times more men than women. 9.4% of the lecturers and professors assessed respective levels as low, 42.4% – as medium, and 16.5% – as high. The rest declined to respond. Men tended to put higher marks, the share of those who believe that the level of gender equality in the country's universities is medium or high is higher among the men. Most of the lecturers and professors (74.1%) experienced no gender discrimination in institutions of higher school (w – 69.5, m – 78.6). 14.4% reported such cases (w – 23.7%, m – 5.7%). Others could not answer.

The share of those who support inclusion of courses on gender equality into curricula of institutions of higher education in the country is smaller than the share of those who oppose such a move. Many respondents remain undecided: a quarter of respondents found it difficult to express their opinion on the matter (w – 30.5%, m – 14.3%). One in seven respondents believes that such courses should be included into the programs of some universities (this opinion is held by the same number of

men and women). Almost a half (45.3%) believe that the courses on gender equality should not be included into university curricula (w – 30.5%, m – 57.1%). Only one of the six lecturers and professors believes that such courses should be included into the programs of all the universities of the country (w – 22.0, m – 12.9). ***Thus, in the surveyed universities, the main resistance for the implementation of gender education will come from men.***

63.3% of the respondents failed to answer the question concerning conducting gender sensitive policies at their university. One third (32.4%) responded negatively, namely, they are sure that this policy is not conducted. Only 4.3% think that this policy is carried out in their university. About 40% of the respondents believe that they are informed about the regulations that govern the issues of gender equality in the system of higher education. A third has no idea about them. A quarter could not decide whether they know or not these documents.

Findings

1. The lecturers and professors of the surveyed departments in the three selected universities in Minsk belong to the group of highly educated metropolitan intellectuals who are teaching humanities in the leading universities of the country: it allows us to a certain degree to think that their opinion presents the opinion of the advanced part of Belarusian society. The information obtained has a certain value in itself, as it gives us an overview of the opinions of teaching staff taking into account their gender, and it also lets you see similarity or difference in opinions on certain issues held by lecturers and professors and students.
2. Stereotypes about women are quite common among lecturers and professors of both sexes, although many of them do not dominate. They are displayed to a greater extent by men. The female lecturers and professors in their views look more modern, their male counterparts – more traditional.
3. The male lecturers and professors in their views on their sex and their gender roles are more traditional than their female colleagues. The women impose on men fewer requirements than the latter on themselves. In general, the stereotypes about men circulate no less than the stereotypes about women.
4. The attitude toward equality between men and women as a social phenomenon is dividing the teaching staff into two parts. The first part, in which women predominate, believes that this is impossible. The second part is thinking that this is possible, and men make up the majority of those who agree [with the statement].
5. Paradoxically, when asked what is «gender equality», significantly more respondents (79.1%) answered to this question correctly than when they were asked to interpret what «gender» means – only about a third responded correctly to this question.
6. Most of the lecturers and professors, in their opinion, never faced gender discrimination in the system of higher education (w – 69.5, m – 78.6).
7. Only about a fifth of the lecturers and professors feel the need to include courses on gender equality into programs of all universities of the country (w – 22.0, m – 12.9). Most of the respondents in the universities surveyed are opposed to introduction of gender education, first of all, men oppose this move.
8. About 40% of the respondents believe that they are informed about the regulations that govern the issues of gender equality in the system of higher education. A third has no idea about them. A quarter could not decide whether they know or not these documents.

9. Therefore, given the low level of gender awareness and lack of awareness about social aspects of gender equality, as well as lack of awareness of legal regulation of this question, ***the majority of teaching staff need [courses on gender equality] but are not ready for introduction of courses on gender equality into education system.***

A brief comparative analysis of the results of the study of the views of students and faculty members concerning gender stereotypes

Opinions of the students and members of the teaching staff in regard to gender stereotypes and the assessment of the gender equality situation in the country largely coincide. But there are also some differences.

Stereotypes about women

Most lecturers and professors surveyed (68.1%) tend to believe that «young women are more diligent and hardworking than young men». This is the most common stereotype as among the students, too. The women lecturers and professors slightly more often than their men counterparts agree with this statement (by 6%). But this gap in views between the two sexes among teaching staff is significantly lower than among the students. Among students, those who disagree with the idea about greater diligence of young women make up 62.7% (w – 70.7%, m – 54.7, a difference of about 16%). In general, the views of students and teaching staff are pretty close to each other. Given life experience of lecturers and professors and the opportunity they have to observe the students in real situations in classrooms, we can say that this statement reflects the reality and really brings out the existing differences in the qualities of women and men.

More than a half of male and female students and a third of the lecturers and professors surveyed believe that «women drive a car worse than men». We have to reiterate that the official statistics of traffic rules violations does not confirm this statement. As we can see, the difference in the responses in these two groups of respondents is quite significant. Lecturers and professors, unlike students, often have a driving license and own cars, and they have their own experience of driving a car, which certainly allows them to judge the situation on the roads more adequately even with all their preferences and bias. Therefore, although the stereotypes about women's worse abilities of driving cars are rather widely held by different population groups, this opinion is characteristic of those who are practically not drivers themselves.

The statement «*The main purpose of women is to be sexually attractive*» was supported by 15.2% of lecturers and professors surveyed (w – 10.3; m – 17.1, i.e., almost one in ten women interviewed, and every sixth man). This is considerably less than among young students, where a quarter of all respondents agreed with it (among the students also, the men agreed with this statement more than two times more frequently than the women). In our view, it is not an accident that this stereotype is today held by youth more widely than by the older generations. Conscious cultivation of sexuality focuses on the physiology and anatomy of the woman, and is one of the factors that supports the existence of gender inequality. In the USSR, even in the late Soviet period, on the eve of the collapse of the Union in the early 1990s, the issue of sexuality was not so popular and so lively articulated in the media, as it is today.

Family roles

Comparing the numbers of teachers and students who agree that «*children - it's mostly mother's concern*» we find out that lecturers and professors agree with that statement significantly less than the young do; they make up a quarter of all respondents. At the

same time women lecturers and professors think so much less often than their men counterparts (w – 19.0, m – 31.4%). Among the students, those who agree make up 37.8%, with equal numbers of male and female students. We note that, apparently the views of the older generation on this matter are less stereotyped than the beliefs of the young. These figures can be explained by direct experience of upbringing the children which this generation has and which gives them a clearer picture of what does it actually mean to care for children, raise and bring them up. After all, the vast majority of lecturers and professors of both sexes (more than 70%) have children, and, judging by their age, [may have] even grandchildren. The female lecturers and professors of higher educational establishments are highly qualified experts who have managed to make a professional career (more than half of them have a degree), so among them the percentage of those who disagree with the statement that the «children are mostly mother's concern» is two times higher than among the female students who do not have children and have not yet faced the problem of combining a woman's maternal and professional roles.

The fourth place among the most common stereotypes about women held by teaching staff has the statement: «*If a woman is economically independent, it is unlikely that she will have a successful personal life*». About a quarter of both men and women completely agree with it. Among students this stereotype has the sixth place in the ranking of prevalence, the number of students who agree with this statement is about the same as that of the lecturers and professors (in total, 23.8% of all responses). But there are significantly fewer young women than men in this group (w – 17.3%, m – 30.3%). The idea about some particular woman's happiness associated solely with personal life seems equally popular among different age and social groups of our population; it indicates, in our view, rather deep social roots of this phenomenon. Although, in our opinion, the young women represented by female students are already trying to move away from such an idea.

Professional roles

Professional division of labor, existence of «male and female professions» is characteristic of a patriarchal society. And as previously stated, the conviction that «*a woman cannot be a good surgeon, lawyer, politician*» is shared by every tenth respondent from among the teaching staff (w – 6.9; m – 12.9). But it is less than the respective percentage among the students: about a fifth of the student respondents follow this stereotype. The younger generation, in this case more often adheres to this stereotype. It is appropriate to recall that we are comparing not only two generations, not only the age groups but also the people with different levels of education. The lecturers and professors not only have graduated from a university: many of them have higher academic degrees, larger social experience which of course affect their ideology, level of knowledge and assessments.

The stereotypes about women are rather common among lecturers and professors of both sexes, although many of these stereotypes do not predominate and they are less widely circulated than among the students. They are more frequently held by men / young men than women / young women.

Stereotypes about men

Men's qualities

Approximately a half of the respondents (49.3% of lecturers and professors and 58.2% of students) believes that «*a man should be strong and constantly conceal his*

feelings». However, female lecturers and professors and female students are more loyal and not so demanding toward men as the men toward themselves. Such expectations are more prevalent among younger than among older generations. In general, it shows how persistent is the stereotype associated with the concept of masculinity and male power. The majority of men of all ages associate it with the mandatory suppression of feelings. As for women, the older generation of women is less demanding of men (31%) than the younger women are (47%). It also may indicate the influence of life experience and larger wisdom of adult women.

Family roles

Let us recall that the lecturers and professors rarely agreed that «*a man should not do household chores*» (w – 3.4%, m – 8.6%). Comparing these data with the results of the students survey we found that among the younger generation almost three times more respondents agreed with this outdated stereotype. We can only hope that the lecturers and professors who held more progressive views will positively influence during the period of study the views of their students on the subject. About a half of the respondents (52.2% of the students, 48.6% of the lecturers and professors) agree with the statement that «*gender equality is impossible*». Unlike student responses, where there were more men who agreed with the statement, among the teaching staff the majority of those who agreed constitute women. This is the mirror image of student responses, where the statement is supported less by young women than by young men.

Assessment of the situation in society

The statement «*after divorce, the rights of men to children are infringed*» was supported by 58.0% of all surveyed lecturers and professors (w – 48.3; m – 65.7). We have noted almost the same situation with the number of responses distributed in a similar way in the student community, as the young men much more frequently than women agreed with the opinion about the existing infringement of the rights of men after divorce. Meanwhile, the men of older generation give affirmative answer less frequently than the men of younger generation, which is more adamant but less experienced. It again confirms that we have here a case not of objective judgment but of the presence of common thinking templates.

The statement that «*at present the position of the man in society is becoming more vulnerable, he begins to face discrimination*» was supported by 15.2% of the surveyed lecturers and professors (w – 8.6; m – 22.9). We note, first, the fact that the statement found among teaching staff almost two times less support than among the young. Secondly, there is a big difference in the level of support by men and women. Perhaps the younger generation is noticing not only gender-based but also age-based discrimination.

We note that some of the lecturers and professors believe that now the rights of both women and men are frequently violated. The number of those who think so among teaching staff is less than among the students.

Most of all surveyed also demonstrate complete understanding that the «*woman's life is more difficult because she has to reconcile professional and family roles*» (however, there are more women of different generations than men who recognize this fact). In general, among the lecturers and professors this statement has found more supporters than among the students. We explain this fact by larger experience of the older generation and their more adequate assessment of the situation.

The statement «*it is necessary to stop treating women as weak creatures*» was supported by less than a half of the respondents. We emphasise that women of the older generation (lecturers and professors) more than young women (students) want to be treated as the weaker sex. The age factor probably played a role here. The older age groups more frequently face health problems and hence may more frequently consider themselves weaker.

Findings

1. In general, members of the faculty display fewer stereotypes in their views than the male and female students of the same departments do.
2. The stereotypes about women are quite common among lecturers and professors of both sexes, although many of them do not dominate and there are fewer of them than among the students. The explanation can be found not only in the larger life experience of the teaching staff but also in their higher level of education.
3. Views on professional success and social status of both sexes are more stereotyped than on men's participation in housekeeping. The latter is perceived as something normal by the overwhelming majority of lecturers and professors, in contrast to the students who much more frequently follow the stereotype about men's sharing the household responsibilities.
4. Among the lecturers and professors who support the statement that «the equality of men and women is unattainable» there are more women than men, and it is a mirror image of the students' responses which reveal that there are fewer young women than young men who support the statement. In both cases, this can be partly explained by the fact that experience has shown that at the everyday life level, the notion of gender equality is perceived by many as the identity of genders and not as their equality, and not as gender equality.
5. Given that gender stereotypes are less prevalent among the faculty members than among the students, we believe that over the years of study at a university young people will have an opportunity to rethink under the positive influence of their older mentors some outdated views on the existing gender order.

FINDINGS:

1. Both among students and among teaching staff the gender stereotypes regarding both women and men are common, but most of them do not dominate. The teaching staff members display fewer stereotypes than male and female students, due to the fact that their education level is much higher and they have more life experience.
2. As far as the views on solving the gender inequality problem are concerned, students and faculty members split up into approximately equal groups. Some believe that gender equality is possible, others think it be impossible. Such views are associated with assessment of current situation in the country's political, economic, social and family spheres. Young women (students) in their judgments seem more progressive, men - more conservative.
3. Gender education is an essential component of modern education, as it helps to eradicate stereotypes and open up individual potential of both men and women, who are not constrained by gender regulations.

Acquaintance with the experience of European countries can become an inspirational factor in advancement towards gender equality. For example, the study of social practice in the Nordic countries with their developed legal regulation of compulsory participation of both parents in the care of newborn babies, responsibility of both parents for the upbringing of children. Life experience has shown that the introduction of new models of behavior was approved by population of both sexes. There is interesting and instructive experience of Denmark in breaking gender stereotypes by methods of strengthening women's presence in engineering, science, computer technology (i.e., spheres initially occupied only by men). Another innovation is the Girls day, Boys day [5] held in Belgium, when the boys and girls of school age in an organized manner learn about the professions that are «not peculiar to their sex». Here, we can recall a similar Soviet experience, which existed for a long time. Latvia and Iceland have experience of developing training manuals and courses free of gender stereotypes for the education system [5].

It shall be noted that our government has signed a number of international instruments aimed at achieving gender equality in Belarus and overcoming gender discrimination. We are implementing already the fourth National Plan of Action for Gender Equality (2011-2014), which articulates both the need for gender education of different population groups and eradication of gender stereotypes. In our opinion, the education system, including higher education system, now is the main and most effective way of advancement towards gender equality.

REFERENCES

1. Теоретические аспекты гендерных стереотипов в полных и неполных семьях [Электронный ресурс] // Psychology OnLine.Net. – Режим доступа: <http://psychology-online.net/articles/doc-1100.html>. – Дата доступа: 20.12.2014.
2. Гидденс Э. Социология / Э. Гидденс [Электронный ресурс] // Киевский национальный университет им. Т. Шевченки. – Режим доступа: <http://www.socd.univ.kiev.ua/LIB/PUB/G/GIDDENS/sociology.pdf>. – Дата доступа: 20.12.2014.
3. Бюллетень «Гендерное равенство» Министерства труда и социальной защиты Республики Беларусь №5, 2014 [Электронный ресурс] // Министерство труда и социальной защиты Республики Беларусь. – Режим доступа: <http://mintrud.gov.by/system/extensions/spaw/uploads/files/UN-Gender-No.5-2014-to-be-published.pdf>. – Дата доступа: 20.12.2014.
4. Отчет национального исследования причин семейного неблагополучия в Республике Беларусь / С.Н. Бузова [и др.]. – Минск: В. И. З. А. ГРУПП, 2009. – 352 с.
5. Материалы международной конференции “Combating Gender stereotypes in and through Education”, Helsinki, 9-10 October 2014 – [Электронный ресурс] // Совет Европы. – Режим доступа: http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/equality/05conferences/2014NFPHelsinki/default_en.asp. – Дата доступа: 20.12.2014.

Burova Svetlana,
*Associate Professor, Department of Sociology Belarusian State University,
Candidate of Sciences in Law, Member of the National Council
on Gender Policy under the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus*

Gender stereotypes in university environment of Minsk

Главный редактор В. Л. Дубовский
Редактор Е. П. Горелик
Технический редактор М. В. Дубовский
Верстка, компьютерная подготовка: С. Д. Чирков
Корректор А. А. Данилевич

Подписано в печать 02.03.2015 г.
Формат 70x100¹/₁₆. Бумага офсетная. Гарнитура Minion Pro. Офсетная печать
Усл. печ. л. 1,20. Уч.-изд. л. 1,60
Тираж 30 экз. Заказ

Издательство ЗАО «Юнипак»
Свидетельство о государственной регистрации издателя,
изготовителя и распространителя
печатных изданий №1/380 от 01.07.2014 г.
Ул. Сторожовская, 8, а/я 69,
г. Минск, 220002, Беларусь,
тел. (+3729)6104555,
e-mail: unipack.d@gmail.com

ООО «Поликрафт»
Свидетельство о государственной регистрации издателя,
изготовителя и распространителя
печатных изданий №2/14 от 21.11.2013 г.

Лицензия на право осуществления полиграфической деятельности
№466 от 21.04.2014 г.
Ул. Кнорина, 50, корп. 4, офис, 401а, г. Минск, 220103, Беларусь



9 789856 802693

UNIPACK®