Instrumentalization of Gender Culture: Functionality Limitations and Social Framework

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Abstract

Background/Objectives: This paper aims to study the sociological characteristics of gender culture, which is considered as a social inheritance program. Methods/Statistical Analysis: The methodological basis of the study consists of the fundamental ideas of theoretical sociology, comparative analysis and interdisciplinary approach. The study is based on the conceptual work and the results of studies of Russian and foreign authors dedicated to the analysis of gender culture and gender stereotypes. As an empirical method, the questionnaire surveys have been used. The article presents the results of studying stereotyped statements. Findings: Based on the study methodology, it has been found that the respondents’ worldview is gender-stereotyped regarding both women and men. Some of the stereotypes about women say that they are inconsistent and capricious. The stereotype is that the woman does not necessarily need to “make a career”; the priority for her is the children and the family, despite the active involvement of women in business. Stereotypes about men include the fear to be recognized as non-professionals and the cold-bloodedness. Men are afraid of losing their masculinity. Both groups of respondents share the stereotype that men have a larger number of personal leadership qualities than the women. But at the same time, the study of personal qualities of the male leader and female leader shows that there are no differences between both groups of respondents. Comparison of the results of the study of stereotypical statements about the personal qualities of the leader and the real qualities of the leaders of different sexes has shown implicit contradictions of gender stereotypes. Application/Improvements: The obtained results are quite unique as gender culture is considered as a social inheritance program. This approach is innovative, so the results have considerable theoretical and practical importance. They not only complement the idea of gender culture, gender stereotypes within the framework of sociology, but also fundamentally change the approach to the interpretation of gender studies.

Keywords: Gender, Gender Culture, Gender Stereotypes

1. Introduction

The unfolding situation in the gender culture of the modern society requires updating of scientific discourse, development and refinement of the relevant issues in sociology, designing new angles of the problem consideration. Identified by the researchers implicit and explicit restrictions that do not allow a person to realize his or her inner potential in the personal and social aspects proved to be connected with the dominance of gender culture. Gender culture is a form of culture, and therefore this culture is not accepted by the person as something external, imposed from outside. Gender culture is interpreted as a natural living environment, which contains behavior patterns occurring in communication and constantly strengthening because of the fact that people have daily contacts with others. Cultural standards having the character of stereotypes are handed down from generation to generation in the gender culture. Based on this set of stereotyped knowledge about the categories of male and female, transmitted into different areas of human activity, an individual’s consciousness is formed; his or her sphere of values and motivations

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is constructed. Through the filter of these stereotypes the gender culture shapes limitations of the functionality and certain social frames for men and women. The entire system of cultural and social relations between the sexes is built on the basis of cultural norms, values, traditions where gender dominates and this dominance is a special feature of the gender culture. The novelty of the present article is that the gender culture is treated as a social program of inheriting gender and gender stereotypes, which is innovative in terms of the methodology for studying a range of gender problems.

2. Literature Review

Gender studies as a new scientific field appeared in 70-80’s of the 20th century in Europe and America. Significant contribution to the study of the problem of gender has been made by such scientists as1-12.

A key issue in gender studies is the distinction between the notions of ‘sex’ and ‘gender’. This issue is dealt with in the studies by J. Lorber13, J. Butler14, J. Scott15, A. Rich16, R. Unger17, G. Rubin18 and others.

Gender has very different interpretations in the modern scientific knowledge, which vary from understanding gender as “sex” to “social sex”. We adhere to the point of view of researchers who believe that gender is a specific set of cultural characteristics that define the social behavior of women and men, their relationships with each other19. The main accent in the idea of gender is made on the way of construction of these relations on how culture and society build these relationships.

Proponents of the theory of social construction of gender19-21 and others cast doubt upon the biological basis of relations between men and women as representatives of male and female social groups within social institutions and social organizations. The theory of the social construction of gender is based on the following principles: 1) Gender is constructed through socialization, division of labor, gender roles system, family and media; 2) Gender is constructed also by the individuals themselves and their level of consciousness, acceptance and interiorization of the norms and roles given by the society. Materializing into action the expectations related to their gender status, individuals construct both the gender differences and the systems of domination and power determined by it.

Contemporary gender theory does not attempt to challenge the differences between men and women. The most important thing is not the fact of differences, but their socio-cultural assessment and interpretation, as well as the construction of a power system on the basis of these differences. Therefore, as indicated by21 the basis of the methodology of gender studies is not just a description of differences in status, roles and other aspects of the lives of men and women, but the analysis of power and domination formed in society through gender roles and relations. It is important for the gender-based approach not only to show the cultural and deterministic differences between the sexes, but also to explain how the “cultural construction of these differences impacts the social status of gender groups: Position on the labor market, opportunities in the fields of politics, education and others”22. The fact is that the hierarchy of gender group status is that women always occupy a subordinate position in society institutions: Family, political structure, economy, culture and education etc. Gender determines the perception of men and “masculine” as something important, significant and dominant and the perception of women and “feminine” as something of secondary importance, insignificant and subordinate from a social point of view.

So, the gender is considered as one of the basic dimensions of social structure along with class affiliation, age and other characteristics, organizing the social system. It is stated in29: “Gender is a social status that determines the individual capabilities in education, professional activities and access to power, sexuality, family roles and reproductive behavior. Social status is functioning within the cultural space of a certain community. This means that being a status, the gender relates to a gender culture”. Thus, the existence of “gender” phenomenon gives rise to a gender system and gender culture.

Gender culture develops according to the laws of historical continuity; each epoch contributes to the development of the sociality, and the historical enrichment does not deny the previously acquired values23. Gender culture, being formed and consolidated in the experience of certain generations, is handed down to the descendants and because of the inheritance process is perceived as something natural.

This approach to the culture of gender is coherent with the inheritance theory, developed by academician24,25. According to this theory, there are two programs of heredity in human nature: Biological and social. Social inheritance program is not written in the genes; nevertheless, it functions as an internal factor of individual development. Academician writes: “It must be admitted
that social superstructures in the form of science, religion, culture and all forms of socially typed behavior in human society is nothing but a result of a grand social inheritance process. In our view, the social inheritance program includes such elements of gender culture as gender roles, gender stereotypes and gender belief. Playing the gender roles is implicitly controlled by the existing system of ethics, ordering women to perform “feminine” roles and men to perform “masculine” ones. This system of norms contains sanctions encouraging adherence to the appropriate gender roles and punishing deviations from them. Anthropologists, in particular M. Mid, have found that the idea of a “typical masculine” or “typically feminine” things relativistic, because what is in one society is considered a masculine occupation, behavior, character trait, in the other one can be evaluated as a feminine, nevertheless, the playing gender roles in the gender culture is obligatory.

Gender culture manages individuals by means of gender stereotypes. They are implemented in the behavior of people and this, in turn, has a significant influence on the formation of social reality. In addition, gender stereotypes, together with the rules and regulations play an important role in the process of constructing gender consciousness of individuals. Gender stereotypes are adopted by individuals in the process of socialization. The primary socialization period is associated mainly with the unconscious and passive mechanisms of culture learning, while the secondary socialization involves greater involvement of cognitive mechanisms and the ability to transform creative environment. The most important step of the secondary socialization is the age between 17 and 25, when the individual’s world view and his own idea of the purpose and meaning of life are formed. This is a period of youth, during which the generation experience is adopted. Events, experienced and sensible at this age, are the basic determinants of the value dominant. So, in the course of socialization gender consciousness of individuals is formed, the gender culture of the community is reproduced and developed. During socialization, the person adopts the gender stereotypes existing in a society to which this person belongs.

As we said, the gender culture reproduces gender beliefs as well. They function as the tools of knowledge of the social world, by means of which individuals explain and classify events. Beliefs represent the values and regulate behavior acting as a means of behavior mediation directing communication in the group. In addition, the beliefs are a means of adaptation of occurring events to the already existing ones. This makes it possible to keep the current view of the world, and therefore its gender-based specifics.

Being an instrument of cognition of the social world, a means of behavior mediating and a means of adaptation, gender beliefs manage individuals through awareness of the content of gender roles, as well as through the formation of gender expectations. It is this kind of social beliefs that controls the position regarding the existing system of normative regulations of the proper behavior of men and women in the social interaction and helps to develop “feminine” and “masculine” style of behavior.

A special feature of gender beliefs, in contrast to other types of social beliefs, is their socio-constructivist orientation. Gender culture creates social-deterministic concepts of the specificity of feminine and masculine essence. This is the basis for distribution of the social roles and responsibilities between men and women and the ratio of their social status. Socio-deterministic views of men and women are constantly reproduced through various agents of socialization. That is the conclusion we arrive considering the idea of the concept of the social construction of reality from the perspective of our research.

The authors insist that the institutionalization occurs wherever individuals mutually typify habitualized actions, i.e. the habitualization take place. Under this approach, gender is institutionalized, as within it there is a mutual typification of habitualized actions, shared and understandable by all members. We pay attention to the authors’ conclusion that the institution controls human behavior by establishing predefined samples. These are samples of the primary social control manifested in the implicit gender stereotypes and gender beliefs. They are inherited and handed down from generation to generation, are internalized by individuals and perceived as examples of proper behavior of men and women. They control the behavior implicitly due to the fact that each individual from birth belongs to a specific socio-demographic group. “Habitualized expectations concerning the representative of a specific socio-demographic group are formed into role positions and make it possible social to carry out the control through a system of norms, stereotypes and beliefs.

The illustration of the fact that gender stereotypes and gender beliefs are the system of primary social control can be more evident using the example of gender stereotypes.
As stated by gender stereotypes act as gender schemes, which in turn represent the cognitive categories of gender. These gender schemes manage the incoming information processing in such a way that individuals begin to perceive, remember and interpret it according to their own ideas about gender. Gender categorization is a core element of differential modeling and, of course, of social control over the process of the “proper” modeling (i.e., in strict accordance with a specific sex). Schematically stored information manages the re-entering data processing in such a way that the individual sets his mind to follow the patterns of behavior that corresponds to his sex. We believe that this setting is closely related to the processes of control of deviation from normative behavior model. Thus, the process of gender categorization is accompanied by the primary social control. Therewith, gender stereotypes are normative and therefore, participate in the creation of a system of social relations and more specifically in the formation of gender order. Our conclusion find confirmation in the gender stereotypes studies establishing that stereotypes influence behavior towards others and may cause a response corresponding to our expectations. Skripnek and Snyder also show that our stereotypes about men and women affect our relationship with them and induce them to act just the way we expect. As we can see, the gender stereotypes are implicitly influencing the way of thinking, decision-making and behavior patterns. In other words, controlling nature is inherent to institutionalization as such, regardless of whether the sanction mechanisms are created.

Men and women as representatives of gender always rely on the gender beliefs that guide them in different social situations, in accordance with the system of values accepted in society and culture related to the sex-based, i.e. “feminine” and “masculine” behavior.

### 3. Materials and Methods

The methodological basis of the study consists of the fundamental ideas and principles of theoretical sociology, comparative analysis and interdisciplinary approach. The study is based on the conceptual works and results of researches of domestic and foreign authors concerning the analysis of gender aspects in the countries of Western Europe, America and Russia. The concept of ‘gender culture’ is considered as a tool for the formation of human consciousness, qualitatively changing the man through social program of inheritance. An individual’s socialization is a result of adopting a “cultural mindset” by this individual.

The study of gender stereotypes and gender beliefs involved the participation of respondents living in the city of Novosibirsk in 2008 and 2015. The sample was formed on the basis of statistical data existing in accordance with the “All-Russia Classifier of Economic Activities” (OKVED). The sample frame for the 95% confidence level and the 5% confidence interval was 1,354 respondents. A two-stage sampling has been used for the study of gender stereotypes and gender beliefs. At the first stage, by a simple random sampling the Novosibirsk small business companies were selected, at the second stage a stratified systematic selection of respondents was made. We have considered each second company’s department in succession as stratum. The need for a stratified approach to sampling was revealed in the course of a pilot study. The results are also presented in our works.

#### 4. Results

We have suggested several statements, which in our opinion, are the gender stereotypes of the characteristics of women and men in the public mind. Respondents were offered four options of answer: “Fully agree”, “Fully disagree”, “Partially agree”, “Neither agree nor disagree”. When the respondents were asked whether they supported or not the following sentence: “Women are inconsistent: What they say, what they do and what they do are entirely different things” the responses were distributed as follows: 39.1% of men expressed full agreement, 45.8% of women disagreed. As we can see, the percentage of men expressed agreement with the given opinion may reflect the fact that there have been the gender beliefs regarding women’s inconsistency in the audience.

Upon analyzing the responses to the question about the fact that “women are too anxious”, it has been found that 36.0% of male respondents fully agree with this statement. In women, 41.7% of the respondents partially agree with the proposed opinion. In this case, it can be assumed that both women and men gave the stereotyped answers on this gender-based question.

Distribution of the answers on the question about the fact that “Men are afraid of losing their masculinity (manliness)” has been as follows: 40.4% of men disagreed and 31.6% of women fully agreed. In our opinion, this is an
indication of the fact that the women’s consciousness is more stereotyped with regard to the issue of men’s fear of loss of their masculinity. This gender stereotype has a negative hidden meaning for women: If men are afraid of losing their masculinity, so they are afraid that they will cease to be recognized as “real men”. Therefore, men must go all out to prove that they belong to the genus of men. But the respondents themselves among the male audience do not think so. In this case, women’s stereotyped consciousness may lead to the fact that they will implicitly provoke men to proof their masculinity. In practice, this can lead to a more pronounced “male” behavior, which will make women themselves suffer. We can see here a cognitive conflicts formed by the gender and manifested in such aspects of the gender culture as gender stereotypes.

The same situation can be observed when analyzing answers to the question about the fact that “Men are afraid to be recognized as non-professionals”. 40.5% of women agreed with this statement, while 32.2% of men did not agree. As we can see, women again show greater adhesion to gender beliefs.

One of the most dramatic issues is the distribution of the roles of men and women in the public and private spheres. It is in these domains that the gender stereotypes are the strongest. Studying the distribution of the responses to the statement “The woman does not necessarily need to “make a career”; the priority for her is the children and the family”, we have found that 35.5% of men totally agree with this statement and 41.7% of women strongly disagree. The answers proving the “work-family” dichotomy in men and women have been given to another statement: “Women cannot perform well at the same time both the role of worker and the role of wife and mother”: 40.7% of men respond positively and 54.7% of women respond negatively. These responses are evidence of the fact that there is a sharp contrast in the minds of men between the business and the family, in spite of the active involvement of women in business. That only reinforces the idea of rootedness in the minds of respondents of gender stereotypes and gender beliefs. In fact, the gender-based picture of the world still remains dominant.

This is confirmed by the answers to the statement that “Men have a greater number of personal leader qualities than women”, men, as in previous cases, have considered that the statement was true (47.8%), women have protested against it (48.7%). However, if we look at the findings of we can see that women have an even greater repertoire of managerial strategies compared to the male leaders and use them more selectively. Of course, these managerial strategies are based on the personal qualities of the leader.

Women’s managerial strategies are opposed to the ones of men in such situation as, for example, punishment, conflict resolution, etc. So, the researchers say that in situations requiring punishment of subordinates, female managers often use moral and psychological impact, while male leaders take administrative measures.

As we pointed out, gender stereotypes attribute to women the emotionality in communication and often in its negative variations. We have checked this stereotype by using the expression: “Women are prone to tears and caprices”. It has been found that 41.2% of men fully share this opinion and 37.0% of women do not support it. Again, it is men who tend to see women as emotionally unstable members of communicative interaction. Thus, the gender beliefs of men regarding women in the communication process are as follows: They are illogical, capricious and it is easy for them to cry. As you can see, the woman as member of communication have dissonant social image.

As to men, we have checked the idea of emotional detachment of men using the statement “Men are cold-blooded”. The distribution was as follows: The two groups of respondents expressed partial agreement with the statement (men: 39.3%, women: 38.3%). If we assess the data obtained, we could see that the social image of men is much more advantageous, because the cold blood implicitly means strength, power and confidence. Accordingly, if a man acts as one of communicants, he is already perceived from the position of strength. Of course, over time the communication process itself leads to the real distribution of forces. However, the initial impetus is given to the communication by gender concepts and gender stereotypes.

5. Discussion

The findings of the study allow interpreting the results as follows:

- In the theoretical part of the present article, it has been proved that the gender culture is not only a system of certain spiritual values, norms, traditions, but also a social program of gender stereotypes inheritance. A special feature of this program is the fact that gender stereotypes and
gender beliefs penetrate into the consciousness of men and women as quite natural.

- The gender stereotypes and views of the respondents show the implicit social inheritance of ideas about men and women, which takes place in the gender culture. The comparison of findings obtained by\textsuperscript{32,33} shows that in respect of the personal qualities of the leader, there is a difference of opinions about them and actually existing management strategies based on these qualities.

- Gender stereotypes about women’s inconsistency, capriciousness, etc. may indirectly indicate that women absolutely surely may face the “glass ceiling” in relation to career and top management. However, in one of the questions we have proposed to assess the personal qualities of the male leader and the female leader. Scale of answers consisted of four options: A “very important”, “important”, “not very important”, “no answer”. Table 1 shows the results of only one of the possible answers, which describes the most important quality in terms of such a position on the scale as “very important.”

Based on these data, we can say that there is no fundamental sex-based difference in sets of the leader’s personal traits. Moreover, these qualities are in fact present in male leaders and female leaders. We have found it by asking what qualities the acting heads of the studied organizations had. Comparing the results of the study of stereotypical statements about the personal qualities of the head and the real qualities of the leaders of different sex, we have found the implicit contradictions of gender stereotypes.

- The initial impetus to the communication is given by gender concepts and gender stereotypes, although, it may be changed over time.

6. Conclusion

On the basis of theoretical and empirical research of gender culture, we can conclude that each individual has a social program of inheriting gender stereotypes. This approach is innovative in the sociological knowledge. The results of empirical studies show that gender stereotypes are not commonplace cognitive constructs, but

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<tr>
<th>Leader’s personal qualities needed for success</th>
<th>Assessment of personal qualities of the male leader</th>
<th>Assessment of personal qualities of the female leader</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male respondents</td>
<td>Female respondents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-confidence</td>
<td>82.7</td>
<td>68.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Striving for success</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td>54.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Readiness for the competition</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>45.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>58.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>High adaptive capacity</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>32.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to take risks under uncertainty</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>42.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to present oneself</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>37.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>68.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Steeliness</td>
<td>29.5</td>
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<td>Proactiveness</td>
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<td>Resoluteness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to make decisions</td>
<td>72.6</td>
<td>72.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>62.4</td>
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Table 1. Distribution of answers regarding the assessment of personal qualities necessary for the male leader and the female leader (%)
the constructs that are involved in the management of consciousness of men and women as members of socio-demographic groups. The gender culture takes part in the formation of functionality limitations or certain social frames, including the perception of men and women by each other, the choice of behavior patterns. Cognitive function of the gender culture consists in that on the basis of knowledge covering all aspects of social life the individual's holistic view of the world is formed, the possibilities of familiarizing with the surrounding external reality and the inner nature of the individual, being a man or a woman, are determined, the level of skills and abilities achieved by men and women is identified. This also includes goals, prospects and projects of human activity. Gender picture needs to be changed, as both in men and women the cognitive contradictions are formed which hinder the harmonious relations between the sexes. Social and cultural constructs of almost entire modern world are devoid of gender tolerance, in connection with the ongoing retranslation of deep psychological inconsistency of norms, ideals, values and gender attitudes. But at the same time, both women and men need full-fledged self-realization of their internal capacity, full implementation of their personal and social subjectivity.

7. References