This paper is taken from

Reflecting on Identities: Research, Practice and Innovation
Proceedings of the tenth Conference of the Children's Identity and Citizenship in Europe Academic Network

London: CiCe 2008

The Informal Curriculum on Gender Identity

M. Koutselini and S. Agathangelou
Department of Education, University of Cyprus (Cyprus)

Abstract

This study of gender profiles in 588 elementary and 1158 secondary students in Cyprus, who compared gender representation in the media. Students completed a questionnaire based on the results of a qualitative analysis of randomly selected Cypriot television series. The results show a coherence between gender stereotypes in students' perceptions and those promoted by the television series. Women, in contrast to men, are presented restricted to their private life with limited action in their public life. The article argues that citizenship education must promote research and reflection on contextualised gender studies, taking into account the different expectations and reflections of the 'depoliticised' sections of the public and the important role the informal curriculum has on the development of students' identities.

Theoretical Background

Definitions of the Curriculum, the Hidden and the Informal Curriculum

In the literature, there is lack of a common definition of the curriculum. Nevertheless, most definitions accept the notion of the curriculum as:

> An educational developmental programme that defines the general aims and objectives of an educational process, the ways, means and activities in order for these aims to be achieved and the methodology and tools necessary for the evaluation of the effectiveness of the educational praxis (Koutselini, 2001, p 4).

According to Goodland (1984), there are five different curricula found in schools. The ideal curriculum is the one that academicians and experts have in mind when they speak about curriculum. The official curriculum is made by the governments, or the local authorities and schools and is recognised as the school curriculum. The perceived curriculum is the official curriculum as it is read, understood and implemented by teachers. The observed curriculum is the one that a third person in the classroom can see to be implemented. Finally, the experienced curriculum is the curriculum experienced by students.

As far as the hidden curriculum is concerned, according to Apple (1971), this is an official and unwritten set of results that are 'latent' through the official curriculum, the teaching materials, the teaching methodologies, the practices of the school unit and the classroom, the in-school relationships and the role models of interaction between all the persons that participate in the educational process. In other words, the hidden curriculum is everything that passes to students unintentionally and it consists of those things pupils

learn through the experience of attending school rather than through the stated educational objectives of such institutions.

Another type of curriculum is the societal or informal curriculum. This type of curriculum refers to everything that is learned which is not included or does not derive from the school life. The informal curriculum in schools can also be a hidden one when, for example, the power positions (e.g. headmaster) in schools are held by men.

Gender stereotypes

Gender is a social phenomenon (Ridgeway and Correll, 2004) categorizing individuals based on an organised set of beliefs about characteristics of all members of a particular group. Golombok and Fivush (1994, p 18) suggest that 'a gender stereotype is defined as a set of beliefs about what it means to be female or male. Gender stereotypes include information about physical appearance, attitudes and interests, psychological traits, social relations and occupations'. As Witt (1997) points out, it is difficult for a child to grow to adulthood without experiencing some form of gender bias or stereotyping.

Ridgeway and Correll (2004, p 510), focusing mainly on the social aspect and consequences of both gender constructions, suggest that 'gender is an institutionalised system of social practices for constituting people as two significantly different categories, men and women, and organising social relations of inequality on the basis of that difference'. In other words, 'gender is a system of power in that it privileges some men and disadvantages most women' (Davis, Evans and Robert, 2006, p 2).

Mass Media and Gender Representations

In the process of implementing gender mainstreaming, Mass Media, as research shows, play a negative role as they produce and reproduce negative stereotypes. It is argued that Mass Media promote a non-balanced and stereotyped portrayal of women and they play a dominant role to the stereotyped socialisation of youth (Burton and Pollack, 2002; Fenton, 2000; Frankson, 2000a, b; UNESCO, 2003; United Nations, http://www.un.kiev.ua/bc/tenders/99/). The crucial role the Media have to play in combating gender stereotypes is stressed by the Commission of the European Communities, which in its Roadmap for equality between women and men for the period 2006-2010 sets as an objective the elimination of gender stereotypes in the media (Commission of the European Communities, 2006).

Aims and objectives

The study presented here is a part of a longer research funded for three years (2004 – 2007) by the Cyprus Research Promotion Foundation, entitled 'Gender mainstreaming in the Mass Media of Cyprus and the relationship with the perceptions of youth. Comparison with the EU policy'. The aim of the project was awareness rising in gender issues at the Mass Media as well as in the role of informal curriculum in students' perceptions. The objectives of this paper are:
-    To indicate primary and secondary students' perceptions about gender profiles
-    To compare these perceptions with gender representations in TV

Methodology

Sample

Participants in the study were 588 students of the fifth elementary grade from randomly selected schools all over Cyprus. In order to obtain participants in the appropriate age group, parental consent forms were sent home. Self-administered questionnaires were given to the students who returned the consent forms. A total of 569 children (284 boys - 49,9% and 285 girls - 50,1%) completed the questionnaires. In addition, 556 male (48%) and 602 female (52%) students from randomly selected Gymnasiums and Lyceums in Cyprus participated in the study.

Instruments

The instruments developed for this study were two questionnaires which measure students' perceptions about the role of the Cypriot man and woman. The one was completed by the primary school students and the other by the secondary school students. The instruments were developed based on the prior qualitative analysis of eight randomly selected Cypriot television series which revealed specific profiles about gender behavior, emotion, self-image and stereotypes (Koutselini and Agathangelou, 2006).

Statements included in the questionnaires were developed in order to best describe these super-families. Normative statements (a man/woman should…) were also included in order to further examine whether certain stereotypes produced by the media about men or women emerged into students' perceptional images. The questionnaire for the primary school students consisted of 23 pairs of statements and the one for the secondary school students of 115 pairs of statements. The first statement of each pair refers to men while the second to women. The statements of both questionnaires are scaled from 1 to 4 (1= definitely not true - 4= definitely true). Extreme values (1 and 4) infer that a certain statement can be generalised hence indicating the existence of a stereotype about Cypriot men or women. A second part of the questionnaires consisted of questions about students' background factors (education and occupation of the participants' parents, time students spend watching TV daily and during the weekends).

Data were entered and statistics calculated by SPSS 12.0 for Windows program. Thus, statistical techniques of T-test paired samples, ANOVA and MANOVA were conducted.

Results

Primary Education

Paired samples T-test indicated that most mean scores between the statements referring to men ($1.70 < M < 3.44$, $0.738 < SD < 1.110$) and women ($1.90 < M < 3.51$, $0.692 < SD < 1.183$) are significantly different (two-tailed $p < .05$). Mean scores for women were higher in cases emphasising emotionality and inferior social roles. On the other hand mean scores for men were higher in statements related to more prestigious social profiles. The mean scores and levels of significance are shown on table 1.

Table 1. Paired Samples Statistics: Comparisons of mean scores for men and women

No	Questions	Std. Dev.	Mean		Sig.
Q1	Men are good at politics	.820	2.99	Pair 1: Q1, Q2	.844
Q2	Women are good at politics	.786	2.26		
Q3	Men earn high income	.804	3.06	Pair 2: Q3, Q4	.000
Q4	Women earn high income	.843	2.80		
Q5	Men must be handsome in order to get married	1.110	2.14	Pair 3: Q5, Q6	.000
Q6	Women must be beautiful in order to get married	1.183	2.40		
Q7	Men scream hysterically without a reason	1.001	2.10	Pair 4: Q7, Q8	.002
Q8	Women scream hysterically without a reason	1.009	2.21		
Q9	Men must have wedding portion in order to get married	.980	1.77	Pair 5: Q9, Q10	.000
Q10	Women must have wedding portion in order to get married	1.055	1.90		
Q11	Men must do household chores	1.001	2.23	Pair 6: Q11, Q12	.799
Q12	Women must do household chores	.759	3.51		
Q13	Men are good at business	.738	3.29	Pair 7: Q13, Q14	.090
Q14	Women are good at business	.820	2.41		
Q15	Men eat constantly when under stress	.897	1.91	Pair 8: Q15, Q16	.000
Q16	Women eat constantly when under stress	1.045	2.25		
Q17	Men are insecure and fearful	.900	1.70	Pair 9: Q17, Q18	.002
Q18	Women are insecure and fearful	.985	2.37		
Q19	Men are good as managers	.818	3.16	Pair 10: Q19, Q20	.025
Q20	Women are good as managers	.912	2.81		
Q21	Men are the cornerstone of the family	.842	3.44	Pair 11: Q21, Q22	.570
Q22	Women are the cornerstone of the family	.958	2.69		
Q23	Men are emotional	.838	1.93	Pair 12: Q23, Q24	.001
Q24	Women are emotional	.825	3.28		
Q25	Men are smart	.894	3.02	Pair 13: Q25, Q26	.573
Q26	Women are smart	.855	3.17		
Q27	Russian women are beautiful	1.060	2.88	Pair 14: Q27, Q28	.000
Q28	Russian men are handsome	1.014	2.04		
Q29	Women read the newspaper in order to learn the news	.856	1.91	Pair 15: Q29, Q30	.002
Q30	Men read the newspaper in order to learn the news	.692	3.57		
Q31	Men are more qualified	1.005	2.73	Pair 16: Q31, Q32	.393
Q32	Women are more qualified	.927	2.66		
Q33	Foreign men working in Cyprus earn the same salary as Cypriots	1.147	2.74	Pair 17: Q33, Q34	.000
Q34	Foreign women working in Cyprus earn the same salary as Cypriots	1.129	2.70		
Q35	Men help their friends	.822	3.27	Pair 18: Q35, Q36	.000

Table 1. Paired Samples Statistics: Comparisons of mean scores for men and women

No	Questions	Std. Dev.	Mean		Sig.
Q36	Women help their friends	.841	3.34		
Q37	Men care about the poor	.886	2.46	Pair 19: Q37, Q38	.000
Q38	Women care about the poor	.877	2.89		
Q39	Men do charity and help anyone in need	.839	2.50	Pair 20: Q39, Q40	.000
Q40	Women do charity and help anyone in need	.813	2.99		
Q41	Men constantly think about getting married	1.018	2.43	Pair 21: Q41, Q42	.000
Q42	Women constantly think about getting married	.968	2.96		
Q43	Men are strict as parents	.922	2.58	Pair 22: Q43, Q44	.036
Q44	Women are strict as parents	.927	2.41		
Q45	Men are jealous persons	1.115	2.62	Pair 23: Q45, Q46	.021
Q46	Women are jealous persons	1.014	2.93		

As indicated in table 1, students tend to consider that men compared to women, earn higher income (Q3,Q4), are better as businessmen (Q13, Q14) and better as managers (Q19, Q20). They also consider that men read the newspaper in order to learn the news (Q29, Q30). On the other hand, students tend to consider that women when compared to men are more emotional (Q23, Q24), more often shout hysterically without a reason (Q7, Q8), are more insecure and fearful (Q17, Q18), eat constantly when under stress (Q15, Q16) and are more jealous persons (Q45, Q46). The results also indicate that students tend to consider that women think about getting married much more than men (Q41, Q42) and also tend to believe that it is more important for a woman than a man to have a wedding portion in order to get married (Q9, Q10). Students also tend to believe that women surpass men when it comes to helping friends (Q35, Q36), helping the poor (Q37, Q38) and doing charity (Q39, Q40).

Secondary Education

Regarding the results of the analysis of the questionnaire that was completed by the secondary education students, the statements with the highest and the lowest mean scores (table 2) for males and females indicate the following: a) None of the statements is common for the two genders, b) Almost all statements have a standard deviation $\leq$ 1, a value that indicates a satisfactory degree of coherence between the answers and c) the mean scores of the statements that refer to the Cypriot woman are higher (from 3.64 – 3.2) than the highest mean scores of statements concerning the male gender (3.54 – 3.1).

Table 2. Statements with the highest and the lowest mean scores of the sample for men and women

	Statements referring to men's profile	Means	SD	Statements referring to women's profile	Means	SD
1	He is responsible of the financial support of his family	3.54	.802	She likes shopping things for her	3.64	.757
2	He deals with football	3.47	.844	She must take care of her external appearance	3.55	.817
3	He is a good driver	3.30	.853	She deals with fashion	3.42	.887
4	He has a sense of humour	3.21	.832	As a wife she must do the housework	3.38	.865
5	He flirts	3.19	.966	As a single she must do the housework	3.34	.899
6	He is the master of the house	3.17	.980	She cries	3.31	.889
7	He must be educated	3.15	.863	She is sentimental	3.23	.848
8	He makes sexist comments on women	3.14	.984	She is romantic	3.22	.814
9	He is used to commanding	3.11	.951	She is an overprotective mother	3.21	.903
10	He is capable of political offices	3.10	.906	She is erotic and sensual	3.20	.825
1	Asian male foreigners are handsome	1.88	.904	She is violent	1.81	.872
2	In a love relationship he is the victim	1.94	.936	She has a criminal behaviour	1.81	.904
3	He makes sexist comments on men	1.95	1.025	She has homosexual tendencies	1.87	.923
4	He cries	1.96	.873	She gambles	1.87	.895
5				She abandons her family easily	1.89	.890
6				She cheats on her mate with foreigners	1.89	.922

The differentiation of the gender profile is enhanced by the comparative results of the common statements for men and women. Paired sample T-test showed statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) in 112 out of 115 statements of the questionnaire. This result shows that all the students of the sample perceive the genders' profile in a different way.

Tables 3 and 4 permit comparisons between the stereotypical perceptions for the Cypriot man and woman that are presented in the majority of the secondary student sample and the number of codes and the frequency with which they appear in ATLAS software. The number of codes suggests a variety of observed behaviours.

Regarding economic and professional life, 75.7% of the secondary school students believe that the Cypriot man should work and be responsible of the financial aid of his family (69.3%). At the same time, the analysis of the Cypriot television series reveals that men's relationship with money is reported in a higher frequency (139) than that of women's (71). Also, in the television series men are presented in professional roles in a higher frequency than women (11). Simultaneously, the consuming relationship of woman with money as it is promoted by the Cypriot series is also found in the perceptions of students (77% of secondary education students believe that the Cypriot woman has always a consuming relation with money).

At the same time, flirting as a stereotype that is presented for the Cypriot man in 49.2% of students appears to be in coherence with the number of erotic behaviors (157) and

their frequency in the Cypriot television series. With regard to the nature of their erotic life, in the television series men flirt foreign women and cheat their partners with them, contrary to women who are presented absolutely faith to their partner. Moreover, men are considered by students to be independent. They are the ones who take decisions for important familial subjects (57.6%) and they are the masters of the house (48.8%). These results are also found in the analysis of the TV series, where Cypriot men's social activity and public life is more intense in frequency (351) compared to the corresponding results that concern the Cypriot woman (187).

With regard to the stereotype that the woman deals with her external appearance, 71.2% of the students believes that the external appearance always occupies all Cypriot women, who are also fashion fan (for the 63.3% of the students) and always on diet (for 52.5%). These stereotypical opinions are in coherence with the qualitative analysis of the TV series. In them, women appear to deal often with their external appearance (277) and with various ways (143).

Another stereotypical perception of students has to do with the role of the Cypriot woman as a housewife either married (58.2%) or single (56.8%), something that is easily related with woman's picture in the TV series: Women are presented to have limited action in their public life and their educational background in the script is low. The astonishing majority of female roles (83%) that were analyzed are deprived superior education, while only four out of eleven women who are reported to work are presented in their professional spaces. Finally, sensitivity is promoted as a female characteristic since women are usually presented to have negative sentiments (fear, distress, stresses, erotic disappointment, hysteria), a fact make that is also reflected in the majority of students' perceptions who believe that women cry (52.5%).

Table 3. Gender stereotypical statements with the highest percentages of answers in both genders

Gender Stereotyped beliefs for Cypriots	Always
The Cypriot man always:	**%**
must work	75.7
is responsible for the financial support of his family	69.3
is a football fan	65.7
is a good driver	51.3
takes decisions for important family issues	57.6
is used to flirt	49.2
is the master of the house	48.8
The Cypriot woman always:	
likes shopping	77
must take care of her good-looking	71.2
is fashion fan	63.3
as married she must be a housewife	58.2
as single must do the housework	56.8
is used to cry	53.8
is used to be on diet	52.5

Table 4. Number of codes and frequencies for male and female roles as presented in Cypriot TV series

Atlas Families derived from Cypriot TV series analysis	M E N		W O M E N	
	Number of codes	**Frequencies**	**Number of codes**	**Frequencies**
Money	14	139	12	71
Love/Sexual life	157	379	146	307
Body and appearance	52	85	143	277
Public Life	27	351	35	187
Educational Status	**Educational male roles**	**Professional male roles**	**Educational female roles**	**Professional female roles**
roles of 47 women and 69 men	50 non university	46	39 non university	11

Discussion

The present study shows that there is coherence between the gender stereotypes in students' perceptions and the ones promoted by the Mass Media. The woman's profile is constructed in the general principle of her exclusion from the economic, professional and political life. In contrary, men's profile is constructed in the principle of freedom of will and independence due to economic independence. Agreeing with the relevant bibliography (Burton and Pollack, 2002; Fenton, 2000; Frankson, 2000a, b; UNESCO, 2003; United Nations, http://www.un.kiev.ua/bc/tenders/99/), it is confirmed that the culture of Mass Media is a Mass Culture that is constructed for the market and is based on the exaggeration and the dividing vignettes of genders. Changes in the gender profile which predominate in the contemporary Cypriot society are not taken in account in TV's representations; thus the media do not undertake the crucial role of combating gender stereotypes that the EU assigns to them.

It is obvious that the entertainment role of TV is based on counter-reality scenarios, which generalise some behaviour in a way that provides stereotyped roles. These roles serve the market and the consumption, providing protagonists that have as their main interests the consumption of money. Consequently, these types serve better the TV economic interests, by doing nothing but watching TV. The television industry hopes to appeal to non-educated persons and to influence their consumption habits.

Conclusion

The comparison of the genders' profile in the Mass Media with the perceptions of youth supports the television dynamics in the shaping of stereotypes as socialization models (Fiske, 2003; Williams et al., 1999) and reinforces the debate about the role of informal curriculum, and especially its role on citizenship education. The informal curriculum of the Mass Media is enhanced by the informal curriculum of the society which is reflected in students' perceptions. The gender stereotypes in the Mass Media and in students' perceptions seem to counteract the formal curriculum where gender mainstreaming constitutes the main point of the gender profile construction

The question arisen is why these series have a high rate of audience, although their depictions do not correspond to the real case of the Cypriot society. Is Bourdieu's assertion that television performs a depoliticising role which naturally acts more strongly on the most depoliticised sections of the public the explanation of the stereotyped depictions? If so, citizenship education must promote differentiated empowerment to different persons in order to promote equality and social coherence.

References

Apple, M. (1971) The hidden curriculum and the nature of conflict. *Interchange*, 2, pp 28

Burton, E.H., and Pollack, M.A. (2002) Mainstreaming Gender in Global Governance. *European Journal of International Relations,* 8, 3, pp 339-373

Commission of the European Communities. (2006) Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A Roadmap for equality between women and men 2006-2010. Brussels. Available at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52006DC0092:EL:NOT

Davis, K., Evans, M., and Robert, J. (2006) *Handbook of Gender and Women's Studies*. London: Sage Publication Ltd

Fenton, N. (2000) The problematics of postmodernism for feminist media studies. *Media, Culture and Society,* 22, 6, pp 723-741

Fiske, J. (1993) *Television culture*. New York: Routledge

Frankson, J.R. (2000a) *Gender Mainstreaming in Information and Communications: A reference manual for governments and other stakeholders.* London: Commonwealth Secretariat Marlborough House Pall Mall

Frankson, J.R. (2000b) A quick guide to gender mainstreaming in information and communication. Commonwealth Secretariat

Golombok, S., and Fivush, R. (1994) *Gender Development*. United States of America: Cambridge University Press

Goodland, J. (1984) *A Place Called School*. New York: McGraw-Hill

Koutselini, M. (2001) *Curriculum Development: Theory – Research- Praxis*. Nicosia: K & A Lythrodontas Press Ltd (In Greek)

Koutselini, M., and Agathangelou, S. (2006) Gender inequality in the Mass Media: Gender profile in public life. *Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of the International Academy of Linguistics, Behavioural and Social Sciences*, 17, Newport Beach, California. Nov 2006

Ridgeway, C. L., and Correll S. J. (2004) Unpacking the Gender System *Gender & Society*, 18, 4, pp 510-531

UNESCO. (2003) UNESCO's Gender Mainstreaming Implementation Framework (GMIF) for 2002-2007. Available at http://www.unesco.org/women

UNITED NATIONS. *Gender Mainstreaming into the Media Policy,* Available at http://www.un.kiev.ua/bc/tenders/99/

Williams, E. J., Satterwhite, C. R., and Best, D. (1999) Pancultural Gender Stereotypes Revised: The Five Factor Model. *Sex Roles,* 40, 7-8, pp 513-525

Witt, S (1997). The Influence of Peers on Children's Socialization to Gender Roles. *Early Child Development and Care*, 162, pp. 1-7