

## Woman on the International Labour Market

*Anna Wziętek-Staśko\**

**Abstract:** The paper examines the changing role and responsibilities of man and women in 21st century.

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### Stereotypes Still Rule the World

Formulating strict rules defining what can and what can not be done by women and men is not only modern times domain. Present stereotypes of gender have their roots in nineteenth century culture, in Victorian notion of masculinity and femininity. Then it was stated, that range of interests for women and men did not match with each other. Women domain is home and children, and men's domains - work and external world. Elements of stereotypes role can be as presented in table 1.

Since ages man was perceived in different way than woman. Women are characterised with: passivity, dependency, virginity, delicacy, weakness, shyness, piety, submission, patience, timidity, distinction, subtleness, emotionality, co-operation. Whereas men are characterised with: power, assertiveness, wisdom, self-confidence, independence, impetuosity, aggression, bravado, despotism, sense of superiority. Kay Deaux and Laurie Lewis ( 1984 , s. 991 – 1004 ) described different model of stereotypical perceiving people according to sex they represent. Its main idea is presented in table 2.

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\* Anna Wziętek-Staśko is at the Silesia University, Faculty of Management, Katowice, Poland.

Table 1: Women and men stereotype elements

MODEL FEMALE IDENTITY	MODEL MALE IDENTITY
<p>PIETY</p> <p>The real woman is religious by nature</p>	<p>DON'T BE A LADY</p> <p>Female features are stigmatised</p>
<p>VIRGINITY</p> <p>The real woman is not interested in sex</p>	<p>THE LEADER</p> <p>Man needs success and high position</p>
<p>SUBMISSION</p> <p>The real woman is weak, dependent and shy</p>	<p>AS HARD AS STEEL</p> <p>Man should be resistant, self-confident and independent</p>
<p>DOMESTICITY</p> <p>The real woman's place is at home</p>	<p>I'LL SHOW THEM ALL</p> <p>Man should be accompanied with aggressiveness, bravado and impetuosity,</p>

Source: own elaboration based on : Brannon. L.: Psychologia rodzaju , GWP, Gdańsk 2002, 214.

Table 2: Gender stereotype components

PERSONALITY FEATURE COMPONENTS	
FEMALE STEREOTYPE	MALE STEREOTYPE
Emotionality, ability to commitments, delicacy, sensitivity, concern about other people feelings, understanding other people, warmth in relations with others, being helpful	Independence, activity, competence, easiness to make decisions, reliability, belief in himself, not yielding pressure, feel of leadership
SOCIAL FEATURE COMPONENTS	
FEMALE STEREOTYPE	MALE STEREOTYPE
She is the source of emotional support for others, manages the house, takes care of children, furnishes the house	Head of the house, supports it financially, he is the leader, responsible for home repairs. ,
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE COMPONENTS	
FEMALE STEREOTYPE	MALE STEREOTYPE
Delicate voice, neatness, charm, softness of moves.	Tall, strong, vigorous, wide in shoulders
PROFESSION COMPONENTS	
FEMALE STEREOTYPE	MALE STEREOTYPE
Therapist, telephonist, speech therapist, teacher in primary school, nurse	Truck driver, insurance agent, telephone assembler, chemist, town clerk

Source: own elaboration based on: Deaux K. , Lewis L.L.: The structure of gender stereotypes: Interrelationships among components and gender label . Journal of Personality and Social Psychology , no 46 , s. 991-1004

Women are discriminated, which is the main thesis of this paper. They are discriminated all over the world, from the childhood to the last days of their life. They are discriminated because of the gender, level of education, and age. Their way to the high positions in the workplace is more difficult than for men.

Woman was bringing in human life wit, spiciness, intelligence and sympathy already in African hearth and homes of our ancestors for million of years. Men also did not lag behind in the past tail. They have studied and described the world, created most of existing literature, art and science, which today make our life more enjoyable, from printing-machine to bulb, through sport shoes, chocolate and internet. Among them one shall search for famous painters, doctors, inventors, the Nobel Prize laureates.

Alternative attitude towards masculinity and femininity born in the past, also nowadays implies particular consequences. They concern a number of relations in both private life and especially in professional one. 'Woman was always if not a slave than at least man's vassal; both genders never shared the world between each other; and still today in spite of woman's position being still in development phase, she is disabled. Actually, nowhere in the world woman's legal situation is equal to man's and often harms her badly. Even when she was awarded with certain laws in theory, long-lasting habits disturb her in finding specific expression in manners' (Simone de Beauvoir, 2003).

Women's economic rights are ignored all over the world. This problem is difficult and it seems almost impossible to solve in existing system. Scientists point out that, although women represent over 50% of the world population, in no country they constitute half of managers or company owners. In spite of considerable efforts made in order to create possibilities for women to use their education and skills, women all over the world are still in low level engaged in creating and decision making processes' (Ben – Yoseph M., Gungry L., 1998). It is worth to make deliberations on the reasons why women are not treated in business as partners, that their access to prestigious positions is lower than men's, that continuously stereotypes rule the world causing short-sighted perception of modern women role. It seems reasonable to try identifying the sources of men predominance over women and coming back to early years of the childhood.

### **Perception of the World with Children Eyes, How Gender Stereotypes Are Born**

Stereotypes of what woman should be like and what a man should be like are from the early age of a child the basis of generating a picture of its own person. Since the moment of birth the way of acting with a child is depended on its gender, starting from giving the name and colour of the infant's layette (girls in pink, boys in blue).

Research show that only after 24 hours after baby is born parents differentiate their description of the child dependently on its gender. Girls are perceived to be more delicate, weak and less active than boys (Mandal E., 2003, 37). Alternately children clothes and toys are differentiated. Growing up girls and boys are proposed different games, interests and literature. Children are treated differently already in kindergarten and at school. Stability term appears in age of 4-7. In fifth year 84% of children can answer the question: who is smoking a pipe? Who is using a lipstick? (Mandal E., 2000). Teachers from early years of education give children tasks according to their conception of school-girl and school-boy. Girls get tasks requiring careful work and boys- tasks requiring self-dependence

Girl's brain is determined to react to people and faces. Boy's brain reacts to things and their shapes. Research on infants (from hour to monthly research) proves in unequivocal way that girls are attracted with faces. They keep eye contact twice, or three times longer than boys. However boy infants are more interested in moves of things with irregular shapes and patterns. Three month old girl can differentiate family photo from stranger's photo which boys can not do. Boys however are better in looking for a missing toy. When a girl is building something it is usually low and long building. The most important thing for her is imaginary people that live in this building. Boys in contrary compete with each other. They want to build larger construction than their colleague. Girls are nicer for harmed or disabled people when boys will turn them down or will pursue them as worse than themselves. Giving a four year old girl a teddy bear one can be sure it will become her best friend. Boy will factorise it and take the next toy. Boys are interested in functioning of different things, the girls- in people and relations among them (Pease A. B., 2004, 150-151).

Children grow up in environment where they have stable contact with stereotypical behaviour models regarding gender. They observe that girls are rewarded for playing with dolls whereas boys would be laughed at for the same behaviour. They see that boys are rewarded for playing with cars, and girls can only expect disapproval for this. 'Children of both genders learn how to play with dolls and cars, but they are not the same way willing to perform both types of behaviour, because they are able to notice different consequences resulting from it for different persons'. (Brannon L., 2002, 185).

Teenage girls talk about boys, weight, clothes and friends. Grown up women talk about diet, relationships, marriage, children, lovers, personality, clothes, other people behaviour, relations at work, and any other things that concern other people and their personal life. Boys discuss about things and activities- who has done what, who is good at what, and how things function. Teenage boys speak about sport, mechanics and how things are functioning. Grown up men discuss about sport, work, news, what they have done, where they have gone, about technology, cars and mechanical gadgets (see Pease A. B., 2004, 153). Taking above into consideration we can draw a

conclusion that girls and boys, women and men perceive the world in different ways. Man sees things and their location in space like they would be putting elements of a puzzle in one piece. Women look in wider way, noticing details. Separate element of the puzzle and its connection with next element is much more important from the location in space. 'Contrast is so big that, it is amazing that women and men even take into consideration the idea of living together' (Pease A. B., 2004, 150) The question arises, can such contrast have positive influence on functioning of the world of business, or is the variety of features owned by representatives of both genders a completion in process of managing, or is it actually a barrier impossible to overcome?

### **Discrimination of Women on The Labour Market - Theory or Reality?**

In large organisations in EU countries women account for 18% of medium level managing personnel and only 1,5% among higher rank managers. In United States of America 41% managers of medium level are women, but only 3-5% women take higher managing positions (Rosener J.B., 1995). In most countries women meet many obstacles on their way to employment and promotion to higher positions. Research concerning the way of implementing job interview before hiring in Warsaw proved that in 1/3 of state-owned companies and in 1/4 private corporations, women were asked different questions than men. These questions concerned their marital status, having children and family obligations, and they influenced the decision on their employment (Mroczkowski T., 1997). Discrimination during recruitment process is just the beginning of the long and difficult way a woman must take if she wants to enter the world of business. If they manage to go through all difficulties during selection phase and they receive the job, still there is a threat of discrimination. It is noticeable for example in EU countries. Eurostat research show, that work performed by women and men in EU is not the same. In the examined group of people working full time job, 30% women and only 10% men do office and formal work. 47% of men work as blue-collar workers or in industry, whereas only 18% women perform the same job. On average blue-collar employees are better paid in EU than office people or formal employees. Moreover, over hours are usually paid to blue-collar employees, which is actually to men. Women however are in major lowest paid shop-assistants in retail trade. Working women are generally younger, 44% is under thirty. Among men 32% are under thirty (www.kariera.wprost.pl).

European Structure of Earnings Study – SES proved that in EU average salary of women performing full-time job, in industry and services constitute about 75-76% of men average salary. Taking into consideration gross salary for an hour the lowest differences occur in Germany (new lands with Eastern Berlin – 89%, old lands – 76.9%). Consecutive in scope of equality of rights and salaries is Denmark, where

women earn average 88,1% of men salaries; Sweden – 87%; Luxemburg – 83.9%, Belgium – 83.2%; Greece – 68%, Netherlands – with a difference 29.4% and Portugal with a difference of 28,3% ([www.kariera.wprost.pl](http://www.kariera.wprost.pl)).

According to data ([www.stop-discrimination.info/index.php?id=#65913246](http://www.stop-discrimination.info/index.php?id=#65913246)) nowadays more women work than when ever. ([www.stop-discrimination.info/index.php?id=#65913246](http://www.stop-discrimination.info/index.php?id=#65913246)). In 2003 1,1 billion form 2,8 billion employees in the world or 40% are women, which is a growth in national scale for about 200 billion employed women during last ten years. Still unemployment rate among women is higher, they get lower salaries than men and represent 60% from 550 million of working poverty. According to research made in 17 EU countries the risk of poverty among women is much higher than poverty risk among men. Households in which women are the leaders, they earn from 9 to 26% less than those where men are the family leaders, however this percentage is the highest in Great Britain (26%), then in Sweden (14%), France (12%), Netherlands (11%), Germany (10%) and Italy (9%). Concerning households where there is only one parent, 85% are the households of single mothers, and 2/3 of citizens over sixty five are also women ([www.europarl.eu.int/news/expert](http://www.europarl.eu.int/news/expert) – data from 13.10.2005) ([www.europarl.eu.int/news/expert](http://www.europarl.eu.int/news/expert)) It is worth to have a look at the data presented in the table 3 below, which show in numerical way issues discussed.

Table 3: Global labour market indicators 2003

Indicator	female	male	total
Labour force (millions)	1208	1769	2798
Employment (millions)	1130	1661	2792
Unemployment (millions)	77,8	108,1	185,9
Labour force participation (%)	53,9	79,4	66,6
Employment to population ratio (%)	50,5	74,5	62,5
Unemployment rate (%)	6,4	6,1	6,2

Source: ILO , Global Employment Trends Model, 2003.

As many as 30 % women working in EU is employed in part-time job, which is often forced by the small number of infant's nurseries and kindergartens they can afford, whereas this percentage for men is 6.6% ([www.europarl.int/news/expert](http://www.europarl.int/news/expert)).

According to the research of professor Midori Otake from Tokyo University, women in Japan do 50.6% of work (paid and unpaid work), but they get only 15% GNP. Although women do most of the housework, they often have to take part-time work. Further, this work is not well paid. Women's salary for full-time work is 62.9 % of men's salary, women's wages for a part time job is 29.6% men's salary a part-time job.

In 1996 the housework was estimated in consideration of the time. The data from this research show that 65.5% of the housework is done by women. Some 64% of women, who were employed in a labour market, spent 15 hours a week doing the unpaid work at home. Also the women in Canada spend, every year, two thirds of 25 million hours doing the housework. While on average woman spends about 1483 hours a year doing the housework, the man spends only 831 hours a year doing the unpaid work. According to this the women work one month longer than the men in a year. In Poland, economists have evaluated that average value of woman's one month housework is equal to average national salary, which is about 500 Euro. Due to the fact that women work at home for free, year by year they offer national economy donation larger than the budget, which is about 4 billion Euro. The United Nations has assessed an annual value of unpaid work performed by women amounting to 11 trillion USD. In world scale women make two third of work and get less than 5% of the world profit and have less than 1% of world property ([www.kobiety.pl](http://www.kobiety.pl)).

Discrimination reaches also women who are holding offices in administration and politics. In USA and Great Britain in big companies boards of supervisors in 1996 sat only 2% women. In 1990 among 4000 best paid American managers were only 19 women! According to American Census Bureau research, women's participation in a group earning over 75000 USD annually was only 12% ([www.kariera.wprost.pl](http://www.kariera.wprost.pl)). Women in EU institutions are unfortunately as in exposed positions in business, poorly represented, which is clearly shown in table 4

Segregation in scope of gender appears also on a labour market (most professions are attributed to one gender), also in companies themselves. In most companies in the world organisation structure looks so that managing positions are taken by men in majority, office work is done mainly by women, technical activities are performed by mixed personnel ( although most better paid work is done by men) and guards and cleaners are usually taken by minority, usually women of colour. Nowadays, men can do much more work than women. Most of employed women are concentrated in 30 from 400-500 main job categories classified in United States (Benokraitis N. V., Feagin J. R., 1986).

Table 4: Women in European Union Institutions

INSTITUTION	male	female
European Parliament	73.3 %	26.7 %
European Commission	75 %	25 %
European Committee	83 %	17 %
The Court of Justice	100 %	0 %

Source: own elaboration based on: [www.baba.org.pl/kobietywunii.html](http://www.baba.org.pl/kobietywunii.html).

Within the services sector, women are still concentrated in sectors that are traditionally associated with their gender roles, particularly in community, social and personal services. Whereas men dominate the better –paid sector jobs in financial and business services and real estate (ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition – Geneva, 2003).

Following above considerations and data presented, it seems that women situation on the labour market is not easy at all. Starting from recruitment process to employment, through selection processes, training, forming career path, salary, women have to make double efforts to achieve what men achieve without much difficulty. It seems to be unfair especially when it concerns work on same positions, and working woman and a man have exactly the same education and identical competence. To accomplish something at work man does not have to prove anything, a woman however must show she is not worse than man in what she is doing.

In modern times we can observe some paradox. What is certainly distinguishing woman in the world – making her special – right to be a mother is becoming a serious barrier for on her way to professional development. Only few companies understand the law of nature and do not cause a drama and a source of serious stress from the fact, that they employ a young woman, who may become a mother soon, or a young mother, who wishes to reconcile family life with her profession. These companies give women maternity leave with a possibility to work in part at home using network, using company car, telephone, and laptop. When they come back to work their work time is settled so that their children do not suffer because of that. Pregnant women have guaranteed medical care, subscription to fitness clubs, subsidisation to children holiday. Company also creates special working teams for such women, where they can work in flexible time schedule. Professional organisations assume that they employ professionals and it is crucial for them to keep them in company. Goodwill brings profit. Companies giving women good conditions of work, get loyal and efficient employees.

### Woman as Unused Source of Possibilities

Transformations occurring in the world, development of global partnership and strategic alliance cause that team work and co-operation is gaining predominance over aggressive and parochial methodologies of acting in business, which makes women's natural talents even more important (Hulme, 1997).

According to Tom Peters 'Women are fantastic and so far unused possibility. Ignoring their leading skills is unbelievable stupidity and short-sightedness of men. In opposite to these latter ones, who like to compete, make hierarchies and order, women are the real leaders: ready to co-operate, team work, communication, exchange of ideas. They can be long-sighted and consequent in searching and developing their talents' ([www.manager-magazin.pl](http://www.manager-magazin.pl), 7/2005). In his opinion if women in USA were at least 20% of managing team, American companies could be in much better shape. Unfortunately they make also underestimated segment as customers. These are women who realise 83% of so called consumer shopping, they are the one to decide in 60% about purchase of a car. De facto when observing women on managing positions one fact pays our attention that they are featured with many precious skills. As the research proves:

- 1/ they adjust salary systems to employees in more efficient way, assessing their individual preferences and potential in connection with targets realised;
- 2/ they observe employees' reactions and correct assumptions and plans;
- 3/ it is much easier for them to set required level of efficiency for the organisation and for its participants reconciling interests of both sides;
- 4/ they have smaller problems with achieving settled level of efficiency;
- 5/ more efficiently combine rewarding system with efficiency;
- 6/ they analyse factors that may counteract the efficiency of reward influence- it usually results from simple fact, that personal attitude towards employee and caring about his/her satisfaction is often a priority for the woman boss (Pływaczewska M., 2000).

Other researches show that as managers:

- 1/Women are more compulsory and appropriate- 61% of studied assessed women higher in this scope, 14% - men;
- 2/ take more care of discipline among employees, 56% for women, 17% for men;
- 3/ make much better atmosphere - 43% and 26% respectively;
- 4/ they are more just for employees - 39% and 24%
- 5/ better organise work for subordinates - 38% and 23%; (Titkow A., 2003 , 288).

Women with managing positions – as notice managing specialists – see work issues in wider range than male bosses. They are able to gather more information connected with particular issue and link them with each other. When making decisions they take into consideration more factors, consider more options and possible results, take much more than one views, see more possibilities to act. They think in integrating, generalising and synthetic way. What is more, women usually stand unclear situations better than men- this may be because their brains can consider more crucial factors the same time.

Female style of management is based on power sharing, engaging others to co-operate, consultations and compromises. Women are willing to interacting, they find it easy to exchange information, much easier than men. Female managers encourage subordinates to work, listen to them, support and hearten. More often express admiration, sympathy, they thank and apologise. More often ask people for advice to engage them in decision making process. They are giving suggestions, instead of giving orders. Women with managing positions sometimes express criticism, but in very soft manner, so that men do not even realise they have just been criticised. Men are eager to perceive business in victory or loss category, women take a rule that both sides should win (Fisher H., 2003).

Summarising it is worth to think, whether modern world of business needs more co-operation or tough fight for a place in hierarchy. It is hard to tell, because experience is based mainly on conclusions resulting from observing companies managed by men. Every organisation exists to realise economic targets through social targets, i.e. profit. The question arises, which managing style – ‘male’ or ‘female’ will occur to be more efficient. One thing seems to be obvious. People work in organisations, skilful managing of their talents, managing in ‘human’ way, using modern methods of motivation, as managing by participation, delegating, dominance of democratic, consulting style of management over autocratic seem to be more probable to be identified in so called ‘female world of business’, than in the male one.

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