

# **Gender representations in Cyprus TV and in students' perceptions: the role of citizenship education for their deconstruction**

Mary Koutselini & Sofia Agathangelou, Department of Education, University of Cyprus

*This paper presents the results of a research study on genders' profile in public life as it has been broadcast by the Cyprus TV, investigates its relationship with the perceptions of youth and compares it with the indicators of Gender Mainstreaming in the European Union (EU). For the purposes of the study, 158 episodes from 8 Cypriot TV series were randomly selected and analysed. Based on these results, two questionnaires were developed. The one was completed by 588 fifth grade elementary students and the other by 1158 secondary grade students from randomly selected schools all over Cyprus. The results indicate a gender stereotypical picture in public life in the TV series and in students' perceptions. Moreover, the present study shows that the indicators of gender mainstreaming in EU are not promoted by the Cyprus Mass Media, as the latter shape a gender stereotypical picture in the public life. It is argued that citizenship education must promote research and reflection on contextualised gender studies aiming at the deconstruction of stereotypical representations of gender and at the alignment with the EU's indicators of Gender Mainstreaming.*

## **A. Theoretical Background**

### **Gender Mainstreaming in EU**

“Gender is a system of power in that it privileges some men and disadvantages most women” (Davis, Evans & Robert, 2006, pp 2). Gender equality has been enshrined in the EC Treaties since the establishment of the European Economic Community in 1957 and constitutes a necessary condition for the achievement of the EU's objectives of growth, employment and social cohesion (Commission of the European Communities, 2006). EU in all its official documents defines gender equality as an equal outlook, empowerment and participation of both sexes in all aspects of private and public life. The main principle underlying gender equality is the right to be different and the effort to change the structures that preserve the unequal relationship between the two sexes (Council of Europe, 2002; European Commission, 2006; European Commission, 2005). Gender mainstreaming is the integration of the gender perspective into every stage of policy processes – design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation – with a view to promoting equality between women and men (Council of Europe, 2003).

However, as European Commission indicates in its 2006 and 2007 reports on equality between women and men, women continue to be under-represented in the political sphere and their access to economic decision-making positions remains insufficient. This makes a fundamental democratic deficit both at European level and in the wider international context (European Commission, 2006; Commission of the European Communities, 2007). The 2008 Report (European Commission, 2008) shows

significant progress in EU as regards employment, education, change of roles and stereotypes. For example, women have been the driving force behind employment growth in recent years. However, the challenges still to be overcome, like the persistent pay gap and the reconciliation of work and family life are considerable. Moreover, the report stresses the importance of quality in the equality debate. This way, women will be able to fully realize their potential whilst contributing to the improvement of the overall quality of life in our society. Lastly, the fight against stereotypes needs to be kept up, as they contribute in no small way to the persistence of inequality.

During 2006 two major events with a bearing on gender equality in the EU are distinguished: the adoption by the Commission of the Roadmap for equality between women and men for the period 2006-2010 and the adoption by the European Council of the Pact for Gender Equality. The Roadmap outlines the following six priority areas for EU action on gender equality (Commission of the European Communities, 2006).

For the first priority area that refers to the achievement of equal economic independence for women and men, the first objective is reaching the Lisbon employment targets that call for a 60% employment rate for women by 2010 which at present is at 55.7%. The second objective is eliminating the gender pay gap since women earn 15% less than men. Another objective is increasing the number of women entrepreneurs. The fourth objective in this area is promoting gender equality in social protection and the fight against poverty. The fifth objective in this area is recognising the gender dimension in health. The last objective is combating discrimination, in particular against immigrant and ethnic minority women who often suffer from double discrimination (Commission of the European Communities, 2006).

Regarding the second priority area of enhancing reconciliation of work, private and family life is concerned, three objectives are set. The first one refers to flexible working arrangements for both women and men. The second one refers to increasing care services by offering more affordable and accessible childcare facilities as well as services that meet the care needs of the elderly and of people with disabilities. The last one refers to better reconciliation policies for both women and men as women remain the main carers of children and other dependants (Commission of the European Communities, 2006; Commission of the European Communities, 2007).

The third priority area refers to the promotion of equal participation of women and men in decision-making. For this area three objectives are outlined. The first objective of this area, women's participation in politics, emphasizes the promotion of women's active citizenship and participation in politics and in senior management public administration at all levels. The second objective, women in economic decision-making, supports the balanced participation of women and men in economic decision-making. The third objective supports that the participation of women in science and technology needs to be promoted (Commission of the European Communities, 2006; Commission of the European Communities, 2007).

For the fourth priority area of eradicating gender-based violence and trafficking, two objectives are set: eradication of gender-based violence and elimination of trafficking in human beings. Regarding the fifth priority area for the elimination of gender

stereotypes in society three objectives are set. The first objective refers to the elimination of gender stereotypes in education, training and culture. The second objective, elimination of gender stereotypes in the labor market, is related to the importance of facilitating women's entry into non-traditional sectors and promoting men's presence in sectors traditionally occupied by women, as well as encouraging women's to occupy higher echelons of the organisational hierarchy. The third objective, elimination of gender stereotypes in the media, stresses the crucial role the media have to play in combating gender stereotypes (Commission of the European Communities, 2006). The sixth priority area refers to the promotion of gender equality outside the EU (Commission of the European Communities, 2006).

### **Mass Media and Gender Mainstreaming**

As indicated in the fifth priority area under the objective of eliminating gender stereotypes in the media, mass broadcasting plays a crucial role in preventing or reinforcing gender discrimination as its impact on population is internationally high (Commission of the European Communities, 2006). There is rich bibliography examining the gender differences in mass media (Arima, 2003; Hogg & Garrow, 2003; Furnham & Mak, 1999; Neto & Pinto, 1998).

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 socialization of youth (Burton & Pollack, 2002; Fenton, 2000; Frankson, 2000a, b; UNESCO, 2003; United Nations, <http://www.un.kiev.ua/bc/tenders/99/>). As UNESCO indicates an under-representation of women at the decision-making levels in the media, which is also related to the third priority area, is both a symptom and a cause of the inequality between the sexes and a form of discrimination against women. From thousands of hours of watching television, children receive messages about gender roles (i.e., Singer and Singer, 2001; Witt, 1997). Gender representations in TV impact children's attitudes and perceptions of gender-appropriate behaviour in society (Fox, 1993).

Thus, it is interesting to examine the role of TV broadcasting concerning Gender Equality, negative discriminations and stereotyped reproduction and to compare these with the perceptions of youth and with the priority areas for gender equality set by the EU. Where do we stand? How much Europeans are we?

### **B. Aim of the paper**

The aim of the paper is to present the results of a research study on the gender profile in public (economic, professional and political) life as it has been broadcast by the Cyprus TV and compare it with primary and secondary students' perceptions and with the EU's indicators of gender mainstreaming policy. The study presented here is a part of a longer research funded for three years 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 long - term project aims at awareness rising in gender issues at the Mass Media, at

developing tools for measuring the gender stereotypes, and at supporting an overall strategy for gender mainstreaming.

## **C. Methodology**

### **a. TV series**

The investigation of Cypriot women and men representation is studied through randomly selected Cypriot television series. The Cypriot television series consisted of self-existent, meaningful episodes and referred to the daily happenings of Cypriot society, while their script is written only by Cypriot citizens - men and women. The series assemble high rates of audience and attract a diverse television audience from all educational and socio-economic layers, in urban and provincial regions.

The collection, coding and final sampling of television data goes through a five graded phase's process. The sample includes 8 series from 3 television channels. The final sample consisted of 158 randomly selected episodes with 2 287 scenes recorded and analyzed. An Instrument of Recording Behaviours (IRB) and Textualised Dialogues was inductively developed for the analysis of the episodes. The unit of analysis and recording of data on each episode was the scene.

The observed action of a person per scene, verbal and non - verbal was coded in the observational key based on the following six categories, which were respectively used for both genders: behaviours, stereotypes, sentiments, roles, characterizations (attributed to persons by others) and self-esteem (the characterizations that persons attribute to themselves). Afterwards, the electronic forms of "observed" recordings per scene were processed in ATLAS software, suitable for the conceptual mapping of observed or analysed behaviour/elements. ATLAS software gives quantitative and qualitative results: it counts the frequency of codes and denotes the interrelationships among them. The recordings of observed and interpreted action in each scene were undertaken by a team of four researchers. The following elements were shaped progressively: codes, categories, families and super-families of actions for both men and women (Koutselini & Agathangelou, 2006; Koutselini, Papastephanou & Papaioannou, 2006).

### **b. Students' Perceptions**

As far as the student sample is concerned, primary school participants were 588 students of the fifth 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 questionnaire. In addition, 556 male (48%) and 602 female (52%) secondary school students from randomly selected Gymnasiums and Lyceums participated in the study.

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 the eight Cypriot TV series which revealed specific profiles about gender behaviours, stereotypes, sentiments, roles, characterizations and self-esteem.

Statements included in the questionnaires of the present study, were developed in order to best describe these superfamilies. Normative statements (a man/ woman should...) were included in order to further examine whether certain stereotypes produced by the media about men or women emerged into children's perceptual 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 referred to men while the second to women. The statements of both questionnaires were scaled from 1 to 4 (1= definitely not true- 4= definitely true). Extreme values (1 and 4) infer that a certain statement can be generalized hence indicating the existence of a stereotype about Cypriot men or women. A second part of the questionnaire consisted of questions about students' background factors. Data were entered and statistics calculated by SPSS 12.0 for Windows program.

## D. Results

### a. TV series

Results' analysis is based both on quantitative measurements and on qualitative differentiations that appear among the two genders. The total numbers of codes that are presented per category for men and women, on the one hand, and the frequency with which each code is repeated, on the other hand, constitute the two basic criteria for the quantitative analysis of the data. At the same time, however, the type of codes that are incorporated in each category constitutes an important element of study on the final configuration of the profile of the genders.

Table 1 presents the total number of codes that are found under the families economic behaviours, economic characterizations and economic stereotypes for men and women and the frequency in which they appear in the eight television series of the sample. As table 1 shows, the frequencies regarding the economic life of men and women give an explicit precedence to the male gender. Even in the category of stereotypes that women are seemed to have precedence over men, this precedence strengthens the discrimination towards the profile of the two genders in their economic life. Women are those who are economically dependent on men and thus choose a life partner with criterion his economic status. On the other hand, men appear to have money as their priority, a negative stereotype for men as well.

*Table 1: Codes, Families and Super-families of Men's and Women's behaviours, characterizations and stereotypes regarding their economic life*

CATEGORIES	SUPER-FAMILIES	FAMILIES	MEN		WOMEN	
			<u>No of Codes</u>	<u>Fr.</u>	<u>No of Codes</u>	<u>Fr.</u>
BEHAVIOURS	PUBLIC LIFE	- Economic Behaviours	14	139	12	71

CHARACTERIZATIONS	PUBLIC LIFE	- Economic Characterizations	11	48	8	13
STEREOTYPES	ECONOMIC STATUS STEREOTYPES	<u>MEN</u> - Money as their priority	9	12		
		<u>WOMEN</u> - They are spend-thrifts. Main criterion for choosing a life partner, his economic status			17	17

These results are enhanced by the qualitative differentiations of the codes that appear in these categories. It is realized that regarding their relationship with money men deal, make transactions and discuss profits, while women ask for money, furniture, cars and travels from men. Simultaneously, the conversations women make about money, concern their guarantee for reasons of consumption. Conversely, men never go for shopping, but their economic action is related with investments and is generally consistent with their professional life. Men are those who support their families financially or offer money to their girlfriends.

These results are also strengthened by the results in the categories of professional behaviours, roles, self-image, characterizations and stereotypes for men and women (Table 2).

*Table 2: Codes, Families and Super-families of Men's and Women's behaviours, roles, self-image, characterizations and stereotypes regarding their professional life*

CATEGORIES	SUPER-FAMILIES	FAMILIES	MEN		WOMEN	
			<u>No of Codes</u>	<u>Fr.</u>	<u>No of Codes</u>	<u>Fr.</u>
BEHAVIOURS	PUBLIC LIFE	- Professional Behaviours	9	142	20	110
ROLES	PUBLIC LIFE ROLES	- Professional Roles	50	142	30	88
SELF-IMAGE SELF-ESTEEM	PUBLIC LIFE SELF-IMAGE SELF-ESTEEM	-Professional Self-image	9	10	6	11
CHARACTERIZATIONS	CHARACTERIZATIONS REFERRING TO PUBLIC LIFE	- Professional Characterizations	16	29	16	22
STEREOTYPES	PROFESSIONAL STATUS STEREOTYPES	<u>MEN</u> - Professional Status as an important element for men	9	13		

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### WOMEN

- Those in the field of arts are regarded to have no morals.	4	4
- As professionals they are not respected in their field.	10	11
- Career women are dynamic and have male behaviours	19	19

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In the professional life, the total number of codes in each category (behaviours: men = 142 women = 110, roles: men=142, women=88, self-image: men=10, women=11, characterizations: men=29, women=22, stereotypes: men=13, women=34) initially does not show important differentiations between genders. However, the total number of females that appear in the role of employees, in contrast to the total number of male employees that is presented in the 158 episodes, differentiates the picture considerably. In the total of 47 Cypriot women, 27 do not work (57.4 %), while only 11 appear to have a constant job. From them, only 4 are presented in scenes in their work place, while for the remainder of them it is simply reported that they are working. Respectively, for men the percentage of workers is proportionally much higher (78.6%). The cases of unemployed men are such as men released from the army, former prisoners or men in the margin that do not fit in with the “standard” professional status of the Cypriot employee.

Moreover, even in the limited cases of women professionals, the scenes and the plot of the script present women to be unreliable professionals: a professor who faces serious problems of indiscipline on behalf of her students who speak ironically to her in a constant base, a military doctor gullible and ignorant on issues of medicine and a TV hostess- student who is crank and considers herself beautiful, a super-model and clever while the plot presents her to be dumb and soubrette. In most of the cases the codes that refer to women’s professional life refer to hires of cleaners in their houses or discussions about the professional career of their children or for the career they think to follow, but they never decide to do so.

It is typical that the word "professional" is used to characterize men only, while the word "unemployed" is used with a negative tinge for men, but not for women. This point legalises to a large extent the stereotype of the non working housewife who is incurious about, or even incompetent for, business action. It simultaneously strengthens the importance that a successful professional career and a distinguished economic status of life play in men’s life.

The results that refer to the educational status of the two genders are also negatively stereotyped (Table 3). In total of 69 men and 54 women, 13 men (18.8%) and only 8 women (14.8%) are presented in roles that indicate an educational background. These proportions, as well as the codes that refer to the educational roles, characterizations and self-esteem of men and women shape a picture for the Cypriot society where

education does not have any value and probably can be characterized as a demerit when compared with the precedence that money and "good" professional position have. Additionally, women's behaviours concerning reading, dealing with political and social life, being informed by newspapers and television news and expressing concerns of finding a job are totally absent. Her profile is dominated by the picture of an unemployed and/or uncultivated housewife with a limited range of interests.

*Table 3: Codes, Families and Super-families of Men's and Women's roles, self-image and characterizations regarding their educational status*

CATEGORIES	SUPER-FAMILIES	FAMILIES	MEN		WOMEN	
			<u>No of Codes</u>	<u>Fr.</u>	<u>No of Codes</u>	<u>Fr.</u>
ROLES	PUBLIC LIFE ROLES	- Educational Roles	0	0	1	5
SELF-IMAGE SELF-ESTEEM	PUBLIC LIFE SELF-IMAGE SELF-ESTEEM	- Educational - Cultural Self-image	5	6	1	1
CHARACTERIZATIONS	CHARACTERIZATIONS REFERRING TO PUBLIC LIFE	- Educational Status	9	28	5	22

In addition, dealing with politics and having political concerns and action as politicised citizens of Cyprus is excessively limited for both Cypriot men and women. With the exception of one series, where two men are presented to have opposite political convictions and discussions about political controversies, in all other cases, men seldom express political concerns. Simply, they are presented in 70 cases to hold a newspaper or to listen to the news without, however, to proceed in annotations. Regarding women, only in 6 cases are they presented to read the newspaper and talk about politics. In no case is a woman presented to have an individual politicised action or political and social concerns (Table 4). This allows us to classify these behaviours in the non - observed behaviours of women.

*Table 4: Codes, Families and Super-families of Men's and Women's behaviours, roles and characterizations regarding their political life*

CATEGORIES	SUPER-FAMILIES	FAMILIES	MEN		WOMEN	
			<u>No of Codes</u>	<u>Fr.</u>	<u>No of Codes</u>	<u>Fr.</u>
BEHAVIOURS	PUBLIC LIFE	- Political Behaviours	4	139	12	71
ROLES	PUBLIC LIFE ROLES	- Political Roles	3	8	0	0
CHARACTERIZATIONS	CHARACTERIZATIONS REFERRING TO PUBLIC LIFE	- Political Characterizations	3	13	3	4



## b. Students' perceptions

### *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  $p < .05$ ). Generally, mean scores for women were higher in cases emphasizing 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 for the statements that refer to men's and women's public life are shown on table 5.

*Table 5: Paired Samples Statistics: Comparisons of mean scores of the primary school sample for men and women (public life)*

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		
Q19	Men are good as managers	.818	3.16	Pair 10: Q19, Q20	.025
Q20	Women are good as managers	.912	2.81		
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		

As indicated in table 5, regarding the gender's economic life, students tend to consider that men, compared to women, earn higher income (Q3, Q4). In the professional life, they consider men to be better as managers than women (Q19, Q20). As far as the political life is concerned, no significant difference appears in students' perceptions regarding the superiority of men or women in politics (Q1, Q2). However, students consider that men, at a greater degree than women, read the newspaper in order to learn the news (Q29, Q30).

In most cases girls tend to be more favorable towards women than boys as indicated in independent samples comparisons of mean scores. Girls' mean scores were significantly higher than boys' ( $p < .05$ ) in most statements were positive qualities were associated to women ( $2.45 < M < 3.09$ ,  $0.744 < SD < 0.924$  for girls and  $2.06 < M < 2.92$ ,  $0.772 < SD < 0.969$  for boys). On the other hand girls' mean scores were significantly lower than boys' in statements indicating a negative quality for women ( $1.74 < M < 3.44$ ,  $0.790 < SD < 1.01$  for girls,  $2.02 < M < 3.59$ ,  $1.02 < SD < 1.12$  for boys).

### *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 6) 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). 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.

*Table 6: Statements with the highest and the lowest mean scores of the secondary students' sample for men and women*

	<b>Statements referring to men's profile</b>	<b>Means</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Statements referring to women's profile</b>	<b>Means</b>	<b>SD</b>
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

Specifically, as regards public life, among the statements with the highest mean scores, three of them refer to men's public life. For students, men are responsible for the financial support of their family (M= 3.54, SD= .802), they must be educated (M= 3.15, SD= .863) and they are capable of political offices (M= 3.10, SD= .906). None

of the statements that refer to women's public life is within the statements with the highest or lowest mean scores. Statements with the highest mean scores for women refer to the role of women as housewives either married ( $M= 3.38$ ,  $SD= .865$ ) or single ( $M= 3.34$ ,  $SD= .899$ ), their consuming relationship with money ( $M= 3.64$ ,  $SD= .757$ ) and their interest in their external appearance ( $M= 3.55$ ,  $SD= .817$ ) and fashion ( $M= 3.42$ ,  $SD= .887$ ).

#### *Comparisons between secondary students' perceptions and TV depictions*

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 women 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).

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 to 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.

### **E. Discussion**

The present study shows that there is coherence between the gender stereotypes in students' perceptions and the ones promoted by the Mass Media in public life. Moreover, it is obvious that the indicators of gender mainstreaming in EU are not promoted by the Cyprus Mass Media. Specifically, as far as the first indicator is concerned which refers to the achievement of equal economic independence for women and men, the results show that while men's profile is constructed in the principle of freedom of will and independence due to economic independence, the Cypriot woman is represented to be economically dependent on men.

This is related to the fact that she appears to be mainly a housewife with limited professional perspectives. In the overall results of the random sample of television series, it is realised that not only does professional life constitute a field of action of men, but also, even the limited space that is lent to the female gender is presented not to match with the female exemplar. The basic discrimination lies in the fact that the woman does not have her own "centre"; she constructs and readjusts her identity, from her youth to her old age only in relation with her children and spouse and reconstructs herself permanently in order to serve the altered requirements these relations have. Thus, the second indicator of EU for the reconciliation of private and professional life does not match with the woman's profile.

Moreover, restricted in the limited space of her house, in no case does she participate in decision making processes, as the third indicator of the promotion of equal participation of women and men in decision-making suggests. The overall results shape a picture for the Cypriot society where occupying themselves with education and politics, Cypriot men and women waste their time. Education and politics appear to have no value and probably can be characterized as a demerit when compared with the precedence that money and “good” professional position have.

As the results of the study indicate, the differentiation between the genders’ profiles is so apparent, that probably a stereotypical picture for the feminine behaviour is shaped. This is in contrast to the fifth priority area for the elimination of gender stereotypes in society and particular to the third objective of the elimination of gender stereotypes in the media. Agreeing with the relevant bibliography (Burton & 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. With the use of special conventions, television tries and accomplishes to create a decisive importance’s classification of television spectators in male and female individuals. 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.

## **F. Conclusion**

The results show that the woman’s profile as it is depicted in the TV series 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. The stereotyped depiction of woman profile is a worldwide phenomenon as the relative literature and research indicates (Davis, Evans, & Robert (Eds), 2006; Burton & Pollack, 2002; Fenton, 2000; UNESCO, 2003). Cyprus Mass Media, as the island is a member of the EU, have to assort with EU priority areas and legislation concerning gender equality.

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 (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.

Today it is widely argued that curriculum is a sociological and historical text shaped by changing values and interests. Any apolitical stand towards schooling and education creates the problem of discontinuity between the society within which schooling takes place and the curriculum content. Nevertheless, curriculum theory must not be reduced to a political issue, nor exclusively anti-racist, or anti-anything teaching; rather it must lead to a synthesis of progressive and reconceptualized ideas that will support the contemporary educated person (the inner self) and citizen (self and others). Carr (2007, p. 3) argued that: "*In short, an educated person is one who can make connected sense of things-not for any immediate practical purpose, but for the sake of meaningfully unified, ordered and/or directed life.*". Having a connected sense of things presupposes a deep understanding – based on deconstruction and reconstruction and not only on decoding and encoding of messages- of all the aspects of actions, messages, and relationships that constitute life.

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 depoliticizing role "which naturally acts more strongly on the most depoliticized 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. Research and reflection on contextualised gender studies aiming at the alignment with the European Union's indicators of Gender Mainstreaming should take into account the different expectations and reflections of the "depoliticized" sections of the public and the important role the informal curriculum has on the development of students' identities.

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### **Brief Biographic Sketch of the authors**

#### **Dr MARY KOUTSELINI**

**Professor**, Department of Education, University of Cyprus

**UNESCO Chairholder in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment**

**Area of specialization:** Curriculum and Instruction, Teachers' education and development

**Research interests:** Curriculum development and evaluation, Teaching and Learning, Teacher education and development, History of Education, Women studies and citizenship education

#### **Studies:**

- BA, Greek Philology, School of Philosophy, Thessaloniki University, Greece
- MSc in Curriculum Planning, Development and Evaluation, State University of New York at Albany, New York
- PhD Educational Policy and Curriculum Development, Athens University, Greece

#### **Short list of publications (indicative list):**

##### **A. Books**

Koutselini, M. (2010). *Curriculum and Instruction*. Athens: Greek Letters (in Greek).

Koutselini, M. (2007) *Differentiation of Teaching and Learning*. Nicosia. (in Greek).

Koutselini, M., Trigo –Santos Fl., and Verkest H.(2004). *Equality in Education: Mission Impossible?* London: CICE.

##### **B. Articles (in refereed journals- indicative list)**

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### **D. Proceedings of international Conferences**

Koutselini, M., & Agathangelou, S. (2009, November). *Gender, Mass Media and Youth*. Tenth International Conference of the International Academy of Linguistics, Behavioral and Social Sciences, Regal Sun Resort, Orlando, Florida.

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## **SOFIA AGATHANGELOU**

**Special Teaching Staff**, Department of Education, University of Cyprus  
Head person of the Administration office of the UNESCO Chair in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

**Area of Specialization:** Curriculum and Instruction

**Research interests:** Teacher's knowledge, Methods of teaching and learning, Curriculum Development, Gender mainstreaming

### **Studies:**

- BA, Education, Department of Education, University of Cyprus, Cyprus
- MA in Curriculum and Instruction, University of Cyprus, Cyprus
- PhD Curriculum and Instruction, University of Cyprus, Cyprus (2007 -)

### **Short list of recent publications (indicative list):**

Koutselini, M., & Agathangelou, S. (2009, November). *Gender, Mass Media and Youth*. Tenth International Conference of the International Academy of Linguistics, Behavioral and Social Sciences, Regal Sun Resort, Orlando, Florida.

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