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# Through a Glass Darkly

Women in the Scientific Elite



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## **Through a Glass Darkly. Women in the Scientific Elite**

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Izolda Takács

THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

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Izolda Takács

# THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

*Women in the Scientific Elite*



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## INTRODUCTION



While there is no legal barrier to women being represented at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences [Magyar Tudományos Akadémia] in equal proportion, this book seeks an explanation why there is still a significant disproportion, evident in the results of the academic elections in Hungary in 2016, which shows a clear inequality between male and female scientists.

The primary goal of the volume is to present the career paths of female academics and doctors of science, to show gender stereotypes that still exist among scientists, and to explore the factors that helped and hindered them in their careers. In addition, it addresses whether any inhibitory factors had aspects that can be traced back to gender discrimination. Also of interest is how the doctors of science and/or academics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences have managed to overcome obstacles posed by traditional roles.

While focusing on these topics and questions, the book also deals with the general problems relevant to gender roles in society. There are chapters that highlight the declarations of legal equalities, general philosophical questions about the origin of gender inequalities, and binary oppositions and the problems of workplace administration and the administrative atmosphere connected to gender prejudices.

The introduction will describe the aim of the research in more detail, as well as describing the specific empirical method, the whole research process, its main points and will present a brief summary of the results to provide a coherent framework for the chapters in this volume.

The first chapter, “Equal rights between sexes. Philosophical and practical issues of equal rights, anomalies, excerpts from criminal and labour laws”, outlines the rules that have created full gender equality, starting from the first generation of human rights to equal treatment and then positive discrimination, also briefly referring to theoretical foundations. It also points out areas where, besides *ius cogens*, the disadvantages of women in everyday practice have remained particularly significant. The second part of the chapter addresses the main issues of criminal law and workplace discrimination, supported by examples. This is necessary because examples of labour law and criminal justice practice most clearly illustrate why it is not enough to ensure equality before the law. At the same time, the need for much more gender-sensitive legislation and legal redress is formulated, especially in the areas mentioned above.

The second chapter, titled “Women in top leadership positions. Possibilities, obstacles and the chimera of segregation”, takes into account the general characteristics of workplace administration, the administrative atmosphere relevant to gender, and prejudices based on binary oppositions identified by women in leadership positions, which still limit their opportunities and choices. The career paths of women, especially in academia and science, are the focus of the chapter. These include the difficulties faced by women when they move up in the administrative hierarchy, if they pursue a career in science, and if they aim for the leadership position.

The aims of the third chapter, titled “What is behind the academic election? Between Scylla and Charybdis: Female quotas or natural but slow change that might take decades?”, is to provide a comprehensive representation of the Hungarian aspects of academy membership for women, based on the contributions of valuable insight from researchers and academics, while also listing the possible opportunities and tools that might be of help for raising the proportion of female academics in our country. The chapter then summarizes their voices articulated on the pages of *Magyar Tudomány* [Hungarian Science].

While many women in Hungarian society completely reject all manifestations of everyday sexism and take collective action to change it, others agree with most of the gender stereotypes, which can be an indirect obstacle to the areas overrepresented by men. With this in mind, the fourth chapter, “Women in the scientific elite. Interrelation of gender identity and sexist beliefs in their careers”, examines the attitude of the female members of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences to the question “What does it mean to be a woman?” It explores what their relationship is to their own social group in terms of characteristics, qualities, interests and values. It poses the question of how the essentializing discourse appears in their own career. It also asks whether exceptions (female academics) lead to a further strengthening of traditional perceptions and norms, or conversely, whether a transformation of the formerly closed system (of the male majority) has started in Hungary. Along with this, how do the members of a seemingly more homogeneous group of women differ, and how do they form different types regarding gender identity?

The final chapter, “Gender history retrospective in Hungary after 1949. Spaces and opportunities after the Declaration of Gender Equality and the shadow of the ideology of the Party”, attempts a comprehensive introduction of how historical changes in the second part of the 20th century affected policies on women and science, education and employment as well as the family support system in Hungary. The chapter shows how the contradictory ideological and practical conditions of the world emerged as a result of the interrupted process of civilisation (the interrupted development of the middle class), and how these affected the structure of social roles. By quoting passages of interviews, the chapter intends to demonstrate the precise traditional and new issues female scientists have/could have faced during the era of state socialism.

## EMPIRICAL RESEARCH BEHIND THE CHAPTERS

**A few words about the empirical research – the starting point**

However eager we may be to believe that gender does not matter at all in the scientific world, the numbers show otherwise. Looking at the membership of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences [Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, referred to henceforth as the MTA], we observe an immense disproportion in terms of gender composition. In 2004, 96% of the ordinary and corresponding members of the MTA were men. Looking at membership 10 years later, in 2014, the change is almost non-existent: the same proportion dropped to 93.2%, meaning that the ratio of women holding a significant role in science rose by a mere 2.8%.<sup>1</sup>

In 2017, only 24 of the 334 ordinary and corresponding members of the MTA were women. 26 men were elected as corresponding members during the 2016 member election process, and not a single woman, which resulted in the decrease of the previously existing proportion of women of 7% to 6.7%. There are only 418 women among the 2689 Doctors of Science in the MTA, which equals a rate of 15.5%. The 2019 member election changed this ratio to 8.7%.

My research has rooted in the justified goal and requirement for the intellectual and scientific advancement of the female gender (which makes up more than half of the populace) to rest on equal conditions. It has aimed to examine the reasons for the gender inequality present in the ranks of the scientific elite, and, as I have mentioned, looking for an explanation as to why the numbers (6.7%) show such a significant disparity between the male and female members of scientific society when there are no legal constraints making it difficult for women to be represented equally in the MTA.

My assumption has been that the reason for women being represented in such low numbers among the scientific elite is to be found in the social structure, meaning that gender stereotypes are de facto still present in the solidified habits and ideologies, just as they were a century ago. Despite not always being direct and visible, these stereotypes represent an indirect, latent presence in everyday practices. This results not only in just a handful of women achieving the highest ranks in the world of science and top positions in institutions, but also in the fact that they are further excluded from the redistribution process of said positions, which in turn allows the reproduction of the status quo, along with its gender-based hierarchic system.

As I mentioned before, my primary goal has been to introduce the career arcs of female academicians and female DSc Doctors at the Academy, the

<sup>1</sup> See Illésné Lukács et al., Grébics, quoted in Hadas, M.: Az MTA és a férfifuralom, *Magyar Tudomány* 177, 2016, 1391. Translations from Hungarian texts, authors are all mine, unless otherwise indicated.

inequality-generating gender stereotypes present even among the ranks of scientists, and the factors which were beneficial or detrimental with regards to these careers. I have also been looking to find those aspects of the detrimental factors which can be traced back to gender discrimination. Furthermore, I have sought to discover how the female DSc and/or academician members of the MTA overcame the hindrances put in place by traditional role expectations, and how they eventually managed to break through the ‘glass ceiling’, and what all this meant in terms of compromises or difficulties. All of the above helps to find out whether their life and career developments differ from the norm in any way.

From a thematic perspective, adhering to the previously outlined hypothesis, and with regards to the above statements, the book aims to analyse two distinct areas.

1. The theoretical framework, i.e. the particular social space determining the hierarchical system of workplace *apparati*. Thus I have outlined the basic notions and ideas used within this area by articulating the definitions circulating in the most current literature. Beside a brief contemplation on the subject’s legal background, the theoretical part of the volume has been divided into philosophical, sociological aspects. Further detailed are the scientific professions tied closely to the topic, as well as the theoretical framework of SSK (the sociology of scientific knowledge).

My aim has been to create a theoretical foundation to address the problem at its roots. I have deemed it important to introduce the hidden reasons behind the visible barriers, the *manifesta* of the male–female hierarchy, the sources of the phenomenon, the origins of the theoretical basis.

2. Secondly, the research studies the apparatus of the workplace, i.e. what kind of hierarchical social/institutional structure/s the women are integrated into, when they step out of the context of family into a larger territory. It also introduces the election system and structure of the MTA (how it has transformed since the gestation of the Academy, and how the elections have developed) as well as taking special note of the typical women and social policies, of state socialism. This lets us see how much tradition allows or hinders women to enter the Academy, which in turn shows how many barriers have stood in the way of the (scientific) careers of women, and what those are specifically.

Finally, the correlations between the theoretical and pragmatic parts are highlighted with the assistance of semi-structured interviews recorded with female scientists (academicians and DSc Doctors of the MTA).

The chapters thus present a comprehensive picture of the scientific careers of women and the overall situation in Hungary. The aim of the research has also been to pinpoint those particular spots where the career of a female scientist grinds to a halt, and what the reason/s for that is/are.

### **Brief summary of the methods applied**

The research: semi-structured interview

I applied the method of semi-structured interviews during my research, which do not carry the possibilities of the in-depth interview, but thanks to not having a strictly binding structure, the method allows the unearthing of the deeper motivations of the interviewees, thus enabling the utilization of the narrative technique as well.

The key dimensions of the questions I addressed were as follows:

1. Early years, roots of scientific interest, family background
2. Junior researcher period, early years in science, life course models, reconciling family and career
3. Later stages of the life course, path towards MTA
4. Domestic scholarly attitudes

The existence of certain variables have been kept in mind, e.g. the transformation of certain family relations and career models (the permeation of dual-earner family models, where even the number of children becomes a fundamental issue, the resolution of which can be influenced by the amount of requisitionable institutional assistance), other changes influencing family structure, workplace apparati (family vs. career conflict).

A total of 32 interviews have been recorded, with 11 academicians (ordinary or corresponding members), and 21 DScs. An important aspect during the selection of the interviewees was to try to represent all fields of science, i.e. both the natural and technical sciences (the fields of engineering, mathematics, physics, geography, chemistry and medicine, in particular) and the social sciences and liberal arts (the fields of law, sociology, literature, linguistics, ethnology, history and philosophy). By the selection of the MTA DScs I chose certain individuals who have already been nominated for the title of academician. The interviews took place between December 2017 and September 2018.

The population of the scientific elite I began to analyse was relatively small; only 418 women can be found in the ranks of MTA DSc's, 24 of which are academicians (ordinary and corresponding members). As mentioned, I have recorded interviews with 32 of the aforementioned, and given the fact that all of the 418 members have the same level of qualification (DSc), the sample size of 32 members is suited for drawing universal conclusions as well.

The majority of the women participating in the research live and work in Budapest in one of the major universities of the capital, and only 5 are teaching in the universities of other major Hungarian cities. The age of most of the researchers at the time of the interviews was between 65 and 80. Only 4 of the interviewees were under 60, with only one of them being under 50 – this last case represented an absolute exception in this regard.

### Further data

Available data was also implemented alongside semi-structured interviews. Shortly after the 2016 election held by the MTA several male and female researchers went on to address their opinions on the election results in essays (see more on this in the third chapter, “What is behind the academic election? Between Scylla and Charybdis: Female quotas or natural but slow change that might take decades?”). The primary goal of the secondary analysis was to present a broader picture of the attitude of scholars and academicians towards this topic, which can add further layers to my work. Among other considerations, these essays outlined the beliefs of the academicians that the electoral method of the MTA and the traditions guiding these elections are the reasons no women was elected in 2016.

It is furthermore worth considering that since the members of the surveyed group are part of the scientific elite, a great deal of additional data can be found about them (CVs, MTMT [Magyar Tudományos Művek Tára – Archive of Hungarian Scientific Works], previous interviews, monographs, scientific and other publications by and about them, etc.), which also proved to be valuable assets to support the semi-structured interviews.

### BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS

My research has strived to pinpoint universally present gender and social issues through the examination of exceptions, i.e. successful career paths. The assumption was that if the conditions for a successful scholarly career among women can be revealed, the possible causes of the attrition will become visible as well.

First I analysed the narratives along the main areas drawn up in the interview questions. As the early years of an individual and the typical marks of family background could be interpreted in a similar historical context, it could be ascertained that the negative effects of this period have only increased the number of obstructions in the case of the interviewees (who typically come from a white-collar background), especially on ancestral and political-ideological grounds. An interesting aspect of this area is that a universal tendency could be shown despite the significant changes of the political-ideological system, i. e. that the scientific career, the academic aim is fundamentally based on origin, and it is appreciably influenced by the cultural capital, the societal status of the parents. On the other hand, this descent was not a necessary premise when entering the profession or getting into college.

No gender-based disadvantage could be demonstrated in the case of the examined female scholars in their early life, which was the same in the next

segment i.e. during their college years. Aside from this, it was obvious in every area that the female scholars have suffered disadvantages not because of their gender, but on political-ideological grounds. Experiences related to horizontal segregation only appeared in connection with vocational choices.

This was followed by the dilemma of the work–life balance, the conflict of family versus career, which reflected the conclusions detailed in the theoretical sections of our work, namely that career and family could only be accommodated with the presence of suitable subsidies. It could furthermore be stated that women under this double burden had to combat significant disadvantages. In order to be able to reach a conclusion in this matter, I have examined women receiving subsidies, those lacking subsidies and those who chose to remain solitary in three separate groups, comparing their answers and opinions. The added challenges stemming from the traditional female roles and the difficulties, obstructions rooted herein have visibly shown up here. This proves that a dilemma affecting only women has presented itself at this point in every case.

Based on the above, it can also be concluded that, while the number of women present in education and the labour market rose drastically in Hungary during the emancipation movement following World War II, this did not solve the issue of balancing one’s career and family.

Above all this, my results have reconfirmed the general tendency showing that the extended family model is not overly typical in the case of scholars.

Beside a so-called “fortune motif” – consisting of three components (support from family or other sources, support and personality of the husband – if there was one – and the professional environment) the research showed that individual character traits have also played a significant role in scientific careers of the individuals interviewed.

These women have interestingly not experienced any gender-based negative discrimination in the junior researcher period of their lives. Here they have only reported disadvantages which are mainly rooted in geographical (centre vs periphery), geopolitical (Eastern Europe) and political-ideological (a socialist country turning post-socialist) reasons. (See the chapter titled “Gender history retrospective in Hungary after 1949. Spaces and opportunities after the Declaration of Gender Equality and the shadow of the ideology of the Party”.)

The qualitative research furthermore demonstrated that they suffered no gender-based discrimination after receiving the DSc status at the Academy, or in their scientific life in general – the only authoritative factors were knowledge, learning (beside the supportive family background, which we have already mentioned), and their results, i.e. merit.

Examining the criteria and possibilities of reaching the status of academician, however, traditional, archaic social structures showing univocally exclusive attitudes toward women can be observed. This was not due to their personal inadequacy for a scientific career, but due to the attributes and gender stereotypes matched to leadership status familiar from workplace apparatus. Analysing the interviews unambiguously revealed that these have to be distinctly separated from the “pure” scientific career.

We could state, on the other hand, that the phenomena experienced in relation to the academic elections are still reinforcing the status quo, meaning that the justification of the system presents itself by keeping the leadership positions for the dominant group, despite allowing women to enter certain scientific fields. As we discovered, the conjoining of several procedures assists this effort, as academic self-election and re-election has been woven together with other social phenomena, such as institutional discrimination, the ideological socialization of workplaces, and other direct and indirect forms of differentiation. This chapter explains why the equality of rights resulted in equality between the two genders regarding leadership positions.

In the next part of the qualitative analysis, I examined the interviewees with regards to identification with the female identity. I have sorted them into five different groups (creating types).

These five types are: (see more details in Chapter four)

1st group: the “dual attachment” type

2nd group: the “essentialist identifier” type

3rd group: the “progressive identifier” type

4th group: the “classical equality” type (progressive non-identifiers) and

5th group: the “alternative” type

This categorisation revealed that they fundamentally rejected positive discrimination. The majority of them view themselves as present on the forums not as women, but as representatives of their respective field and themselves. Another part – showing a stronger attitude for identification with the female group – wants to further the rise in the number of female scholars both in the ranks of DScs and academicians in one way or another (not, however, with positive discrimination). There were only a handful who deemed the female quota not a good but an essentially necessary solution. The attitudes on how much women want to become leaders or how capable they are to fulfil these roles were also divisive among the individual types.

An interesting facet of the results was that none of the women have ever suffered any disadvantage in their career as a result of being women – not one scientist examined in my research fell victim to any discrimination in the world

## INTRODUCTION

of science. They did, however, in the academic ranks and in leadership roles, as heads of university departments. They identified and experienced statements emphasising a particular gender and/or affecting that gender negatively from their male co-workers on several occasions, either coded in the language used or while thoroughly examining the election systems and the methods thereof.

The research has affirmed, furthermore, that the inequalities in opportunities with regards to the world outside the Academy were primarily rooted in the traditional and familial female gender roles. In other words, the existence of disparities has had a negative influence on the living conditions of women on many occasions, leading to direct or indirect discrimination.

To sum up, sufficient conditions required for an academic career, apart from merit, were generally the result of sheer luck in the lives of the examined female scientists. Moreover, academic positions were not always explicitly desired, or part of the ambitions of the women interviewed. It can therefore be concluded that gender did not play any role in the case of 'pure' scientific achievement, while in the case of the academic elections it became more of an issue and was articulated, reproducing the traditional relational structure of Hungarian society.



# EQUAL RIGHTS BETWEEN SEXES

Philosophical and practical issues of equal rights, anomalies,  
excerpts from criminal and labour laws



## INTRODUCTION

After the first generation of human rights – the civil and political rights and liberties (the right to vote, freedom of religion, freedom of expression, the right to legal capacity, etc.) – had been codified, an even more sophisticated codification followed with the second generation of human rights introducing the fields of economic and social rights. Guaranteeing the right to work and education for women equalled a significant social opportunity and opened the way for them to the areas outside the family. Simultaneously, the United Nations and the Council of Europe have also included agreements in their defence activities solidified with regards to requirements of equal treatment, i.e. the prohibition of discrimination.

Therefore, the prohibition of discrimination itself is not just another right in the international catalogue of human rights, but has become a cornerstone of the application of human rights.<sup>2</sup>

It has also rapidly become clear that, in order for fundamental rights to be put into practice, equality before the law will not suffice – equal opportunities must be realized.

Despite the recognition of the above, despite the fact that the equal rights are guaranteed at the national and the international level, despite the requirement of equal treatment, despite the cogent legislation on non-discrimination, direct and indirect gender discrimination continues to exist. It can still be observed, for example, in the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles, in the dilemmas of work–life reconciliation (which markedly affects women), and in lower wages. But discrimination is also present in job interviews. This refers primarily to employers who still look to a particular group of women as a “dangerous workforce”,<sup>3</sup> because domestic parenting or nurturing roles are still predominantly the responsibility of women (“disadvantage of maternity”). Despite the fact that both national and international regulations

<sup>2</sup> Kazuska, M.: A diszkrimináció tilalma az Európai Unióban, *Sectio juridica et politica*, Miskolc, Tomus XXIX/1, 2011, 225.

<sup>3</sup> Monori, G.: *Esélyegyenlőség és feminista jog – a női jogok pragmatikus érvényesülése*. PhD thesis, Pécs, 2011, <https://ajk.pte.hu/sites/ajk.pte.hu/files/file/doktori-iskola/monori-gabor/monori-gabor-vedes-ertekezes.pdf> (accessed 12 October 2019), 144.

state that women bearing children must not be disadvantaged,<sup>4</sup> it is often almost impossible to seek legal redress in such cases due to the difficulty of detecting the gender disparity in organisational structures in the case where they are rooted in the injustice stemming from deep-seated norms i.e. archaic gender roles.<sup>5</sup> Traditional beliefs and stereotypes based thereon provide the basis for criminal cases of structural violence, which needs to be addressed being an extremely important human rights issue.

This chapter outlines the rules that have created full gender equality, starting from the first generation of human rights to equal treatment and then dealing with positive discrimination, also briefly referring to the theoretical foundations. The chapter also points out areas where, besides *ius cogens*, the disadvantages of women in everyday practice have remained particularly significant. Thus, the second part of the chapter addresses the main issues of criminal law and workplace discrimination, supported by examples. This is necessary because examples of labour law and criminal justice practice most clearly illustrate why it is not enough to ensure equality before the law. At the same time, the need for much more gender-sensitive legislation and legal redress is being formulated, especially in the areas mentioned above.

#### THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUAL TREATMENT AND EQUITY

The issue of gender equality is based on the moral and philosophical values of equality and justice and the requirements of the enforcement of universal human and moral rights.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the starting point is the principle of ensuring equal rights, which is in turn based on human rights and natural right principles providing the foundation of legal documents after World War II. The question can be posed whether natural rights presuming that every person has equal human rights and dignity did not exist before. According to

<sup>4</sup> Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union Article 33. (1) The family shall enjoy legal, economic and social protection. (2) To reconcile family and professional life, everyone shall have the right to protection from dismissal for a reason connected with maternity and the right to paid maternity leave and to parental leave following the birth or adoption of a child, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text\\_en.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf) (accessed: 14 October 2019).

<sup>5</sup> Eagly, A. – Carli, L. L.: Women and the Labyrinth of Leadership, *Harvard Business Review*, 2007, <https://hbr.org/2007/09/women-and-the-labyrinth-of-leadership> (accessed 12 November 2019).

<sup>6</sup> Czibere, I.: „Az asszonyok történetének megírásáról elfeledkezett még a történelem is” – A nőtudomány útja az intézményesülésig, *Metszetek. Társadalomtudományi Folyóirat* 2014/3(3), 25, [http://metszetek.unideb.hu/files/201403\\_02\\_czibere\\_ibolya\\_0.pdf](http://metszetek.unideb.hu/files/201403_02_czibere_ibolya_0.pdf) (accessed: 12 November 2019).

Maritain,<sup>7</sup> in order to answer this, we first have to separate the ontological and gnoseological study of natural law. Following this line of thought we can claim that human rights, the right to life, i.e. natural rights, have always existed, are of the same age as mankind, but unlike positive rights, it took effort to fully realize them. Social development, the development and cognition of man, an even deeper knowledge of ourselves may have been the factors that eventually led us to recognize the ever-existing fundamental principles of natural law, which have been transformed into laws stated *expressis verbis* in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.<sup>8</sup>

However, there were aspirations to something similar much earlier in time. Classical equality was, for example, reflected in the ideas of the 17th-century philosopher Nicolas de Condorcet, who described the relationship between the “discovery” of human rights and the legislative power of majority decision-making in his work titled *Esquisse*. He also addressed the issue of women’s equality, which he considered a moral evidence.<sup>9</sup> “One of the most important achievements of the human spirit, in terms of overall prosperity, is the complete destruction of prejudice that have created legal inequalities between the two sexes, with devastating consequences for the favoured party.”<sup>10</sup>

Despite its early appearance and the later – initially less successful – codification of women’s suffrage as a result of emancipation movements, the first significant document to ban discrimination on a large scale was not published until the 20th century. The United Nations General Assembly accepted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10, 1948, primarily to ensure that crimes against humanity committed during World War II – such as the Shoah – can never happen again.

We need to note that the UN Charter – preceding this document – had made an *expressis verbis* declaration on human rights on several points, but it was only about equality in general, also stating the prohibition of racial, gender and religious discrimination.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Maritain, J.: A személy jogai. A politikai humanizmus, in Frivaldszky, J. (ed.): *Természetjog. Szöveggyűjtemény*, Budapest, Szent István Társulat, 2006, 90–92; see also Maritain, quoted by Turgonyi, Z.: A természetjog rehabilitálása felé – Gondolatok Frivaldszky János új könyvének kapcsán, *Jogelméleti szemle*, 2012/1, 173.

<sup>8</sup> About this issue see my article: Takács, I.: Az emberi jogok lehetnek-e univerzálisak? A kulturális relativizmus és az univerzalizmus konfliktusa az emberi jogok filozófiai és gyakorlati megközelítéseiben [Can human rights be universal? Cultural Relativism versus Universalism, philosophical and practical approaches in the context of Human Rights], *Jogelméleti Szemle*, 2021/3, 84–108.

<sup>9</sup> Ludassy, M.: A jövő nemzedékek iránti felelősség Condorcet koncepciója, *Magyar Filozófiai Szemle*, Vol. 56, No. 3, 2012, 9–14.

<sup>10</sup> Condorcet, quoted by Ludassy: A jövő nemzedékek, 9–14.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Kovács, P.: *Nemzetközi jog*, Budapest, Osiris, 2016, 369–377.

Thus, the human right to life as a prerequisite for all other rights, and the right for the human being to live a dignified life are among the inalienable rights, the same as developing one's character and practicing one's talents without restrictions. The rights of the individual as a social being, and those of the individual as a worker are built upon the inalienable rights. Taking this into account, the inner circle is the fundamental right to life, dignity and liberty of the biologically female or male individual, while the rights of the social being belong to the second and third generations of Human Rights representing equal rights for participation in the community and equal rights to work, to peace, to property, etc.

Most significantly, during the course of history, at an important point in its development of conscience-consciousness, humanity has recognized certain human rights as obligatory and considered it essential to recognize them as fundamental and inalienable birthrights regardless of gender, age, race, religion, etc., i.e. any kind of protected characteristics. The creators of the statement (the United Nations General Assembly's Universal Declaration of Human Rights) are in agreement without discord with regards to this realization.<sup>12</sup>

All other rights were thus based on the aforementioned – in concreto – human rights as moral rights, which are granted to individuals irrespective of whether a state recognizes their existence and/or guarantees their emergence or not.

Moreover, according to this, no state can claim that the treatment of its own citizens is purely internal. A state cannot do so even if it has no other international treaty obligations. Although the first comprehensive international human rights document, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is not a treaty in the legal sense, but a non-binding recommendation made by the General Assembly, most international jurists have already considered it a normative document.<sup>13</sup> Today, modern states recognize human rights by incorporating them into their own legal system, more specifically into their constitution.

The basis of human rights in Hungary is the Constitution, accepted on 18 April 2011, entering into force on 1 January 2012. Article I (1) states: "A person's inviolable and inalienable rights must be respected".<sup>14</sup> Gender equality is enshrined in our Constitution due to historical reasons. Article XV (3) deals with this subject, stating: "(3) Women and men are equal."

<sup>12</sup> Frivaldszky, J. (2015): *Az emberi jogok természetjogi megalapozásának kortárs problémáiról a legújabb olasz jogfilozófiai irodalom tükrében*, <https://frivaldszkyjanos.hu/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Az-emberi-jogok-termeszetjogi-megalapozasanak-kortars-problemairol.pdf> (accessed 12 November 2019), 10.

<sup>13</sup> Kiss, B: Az egyenlő bánásmód elvének és a hátrányos megkülönböztetés tilalmának jogi szabályozása, *Acta Juridica et Politica*, 2003, Tomus LXIII Fasc. 12.

<sup>14</sup> Magyarország Alaptörvénye, <https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=a1100425.atv> (accessed 12 November 2019).

Article 66 (1) of Act XX of 1949, the former Hungarian Constitution also stated full equality between men and women: “The Republic of Hungary shall ensure the equality of men and women in all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.” In other words, it introduced and unified the new elements of the legislation that led to the legal equality of women in Hungary.<sup>15</sup>

Among the international rules on the situation of women, the 1953 UN Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the 1957 Convention on the Citizenship of Married Women and the 1962 Convention on the Rights of Women for Marriage are specifically worth mentioning.<sup>16</sup>

Human rights are therefore among the inviolable and inalienable rights of all human beings. As Rawls explains in his *A Theory of Justice*, it is because of the fact that every person is human, so certain rights are equally meant for everyone. This is the most basic requirement of social coexistence and justice.

In other words, not only were these rights declared after World War II, but stating the unity of the human race became equally important along with it. According to certain scholars, contemporary humanism is an abstract and legal–moral attempt to establish human unity, regardless of biological–natural factors, and independent of human nature.<sup>17</sup> Based on this equality, people can agree on additional principles of social organisation that they consider to be fair, regardless of the social situation of any individual, meaning that these principles of justice are, according to Rawls, completely objective. They are, therefore, “principles which operate under all other conditions, that is to say, which everyone would agree with, even if they were completely equal or if they did not foresee their social status.”<sup>18</sup>

According to naturalist Maritain, referring to the inviolability of fundamental rights, it also stated that the right to obey the law is generally a moral obligation only if specific laws meet these requirements of natural law. Because, as Rawls claims, we have natural rights because a human is a person, not just a biological entity of a community.<sup>19</sup> Let us however also remember that, by contrast, when defining the concept of law, Hart considered a broader interpretation thereof. In his view, there are rules that are legitimate along the rules of recognition of the legal system and these can be both morally just and

<sup>15</sup> 1949. évi XX. törvény. A Magyar Népköztársaság Alkotmánya, [https://net.jogtar.hu/getpdf?docid=94900020.TV&targetdate=fffff4&printTitle=1949.+%C3%A9vi+XX.+t%C3%B6rv%C3%A9ny&referer=http%3A//net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy\\_doc.cgi%3Fdocid%3D00000001.TXT](https://net.jogtar.hu/getpdf?docid=94900020.TV&targetdate=fffff4&printTitle=1949.+%C3%A9vi+XX.+t%C3%B6rv%C3%A9ny&referer=http%3A//net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy_doc.cgi%3Fdocid%3D00000001.TXT) (accessed 10 November 2019); Act XX of 1949. The Constitution of the Republic of Hungary, <https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cescr/docs/E.C.12.HUN.3-Annex2.pdf> (accessed 10 November 2019).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Kovács: *Nemzetközi jog*, 376.

<sup>17</sup> Barcsi, T: *Az emberi méltóság filozófiája*, Budapest, Typotex, 2013, 11.

<sup>18</sup> Rawls, J.: *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1999, 11. Revised edition.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Paksy, M.: *Hart „visszatérő kérdései” és a francia jogbölcseleti hagyomány*. PhD thesis, manuscript, PPKE Jog- és Államtudományi Doktori Iskola, 2011, 23.

unjust. He added that the moral and political issue of respecting rights deemed immoral should be reconsidered in such cases.<sup>20</sup> In any case, regardless of grounding our argumentation from the natural law, or from positive legal theory, both support the present argument about the gender issue.

It is, therefore, worth discussing the ideas below in relation to justice. First in order to draw attention to the complexity of the concept of justice and secondly because the need for justice, equal treatment, equal opportunities and equity have come to the forefront past the universal recognition of first-generation human rights, further building on the requirement for justice. Along these lines, the transformation of positive discrimination into cohesive legislation has become equally important for both minorities and women.

*SUUM CUIQUE TRIBUERE!* – IS EQUITY EQUALLY JUST FOR EVERYONE?

The question of what justice is, according to Hans Kelsen, has always been widely debated. In fact, perhaps no question has been debated so fiercely, thought about more deeply by philosophers and had more valuable blood shed over it in history than the question of justice. Nevertheless, it remains unanswered to this day. In his essay *What is Justice?*<sup>21</sup> Kelsen actually argues that justice cannot be deduced from objective theorems. Since this question cannot be answered in an absolute way in his opinion, it is the positive law that can, in a kind of social order, realize the only thing available: the relative truth (truth alternatives). Kelsen also pointed out that certain doctrines, religious or metaphysical approaches (see, for example, Plato's absolute idea of the Good) sought to absolutize this relative truth by transposing the concept of justice into the transcendent, their approaches however also referred all questions of absolute justice into the competence of the divine. In contrast, positive law completely excluded this and natural law itself as well: everything where standards can be deduced from nature.<sup>22</sup>

What we can accept is that human interests can be ranked according to the different conflicts of interest on the basis of which of these represents greater value. And, according to Kelsen, when it comes to value, we cannot make objective statements such as those of the laws of physics. In fact, he goes further and claims that every value system is in fact a social phenomenon, social construct, and although it may be said that certain values are consensually agreed

<sup>20</sup> Hart, H. L. A.: *A jog fogalma*, Budapest, Osiris, 1995; and confer Frivaldszky, J.: A harti természetjog minimális tartalma az olasz jogfilozófia és a klasszikus természetjogi gondolkodás szemszögéből, *Világosság* 2010. tavasz, 157–187.

<sup>21</sup> Kelsen, H.: Mi az igazságosság?, in Varga, Csaba (ed.): *Jog és filozófia – Antológia a század első felének kontinentális jogi gondolkodása köréből*, Budapest, Osiris, 1998, 202–218.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, 209.

upon between societies and their members, they are still not objective but rather relative. (For example, is freedom more valuable, or life?<sup>23</sup> Simultaneously – and this is pivotal for our subject –, values that can further the search for justice, such as freedom, peace, democracy, i.e. the justice of tolerance are essential in theories of positivist thinkers. So, regardless of the fact that, according to Kelsen, absolute values of justice do not exist, there are and should still be relative truths that express consensus on the highest values with the law.

The link between law and justice was already expressed much earlier: in Roman law under the heading: *honeste vivere, alterum non laedere, suum cuique tribuere* (to live honourably: not to injure another, to give each his due).<sup>24</sup> (Although Kelsen argues that “to give each his due” is merely an empty formula, cannot give an answer to justice, and can even be used to justify any order.) This triple imperative dates back to the ancient Greeks and was based on the Socratic idea that justice means to give everyone what they were entitled to. And, de facto, we give what is due to everyone relative to one another only if, according to Aristotle, we treat the familiar familiarly, and the different differently (proportionally different, that is by the degree of difference). The most basic standard of justice can only be built on this.<sup>25</sup>

Herbert Hart’s idea of justice expresses the same idea as “similar cases must be treated similarly, different cases treated differently.”<sup>26</sup> This is, in fact, assumed in *aequitas*, which represents fairness in this context. Hart’s theory, which fought to combat social inequality (and which looked at legislation from a legal viewpoint, the aim being to prevent inequality in terms of this progressivist idea), became the basic principle of discrimination.<sup>27</sup> In effect, Hart argued that society should judge an individual based on their own performance, not based on which group they are a member of. Hart also advocated issues – primarily those related to the disenfranchisement of minorities – that he considered important for social progression, thus he not only fought for the equal rights of homosexuals, but made a stand beside other vulnerable social groups as well. For example, he has also earnestly addressed the social barriers faced by people with disabilities.<sup>28</sup>

Hart has also had a great influence on Rawls’ theory, which we have mentioned above. However, in the case of Rawls, all this theoretical reasoning can best be grasped in terms of the so-called “justice of fairness”. Rawls has admittedly formulated his theory of justice primarily in order to develop a more elevated, abstract theory from the known social treaties (Rousseau, Kant, Locke, etc.).

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>24</sup> Justinian: *Institutes*, Book 1, Title 1, Sec. 3.

<sup>25</sup> Tóth J. Z.: John Rawls igazságosság-elmélete, *Jogelméleti Szemle*, 2005/1. n.d.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted by Monori: *Esélyegyenlőség*, 4.

<sup>27</sup> See also Monori: *Esélyegyenlőség* and Horkay Hörcher, F.: Hart és az oxfordi filozófia: eszmetörténeti kontextusok, *Világosság*, 2010 tavasz, 15–42.

<sup>28</sup> Horkay Hörcher: Hart és az oxfordi filozófia, 40.

If Rawls' abstract theory of justice is taken as a basis, it can be deduced that "First: each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive scheme of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for others. Second: social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all."<sup>29</sup>

So, Rawls' second principle was based on the fact that people are not the same, their cognitive abilities, talents, economic, cultural and social backgrounds are different. Therefore, equality must not be enforced by suppressing disparities, i.e. the distinct characteristics.<sup>30</sup> In this sense, Rawls' statement may also be related to that of Edgar Morin.

According to Morin, we must accept the paradigm that links "the idea of human unity to the concept of difference, and theories that are capable of interpreting human unity and human differences at the same time."<sup>31</sup> This can be seen as the only way in which justice and equal opportunities can be formulated along with this inclusive concept.

In addition, Morin explained that we need to understand that there are bioanthropological conditions (the capabilities of the human brain), socio-cultural conditions and neological conditions.<sup>32</sup> These, in turn, allow the "real" questioning of the world and of human knowledge (such as the collision of relative truths and values by Kelsen). We can see even in Hart's argumentation that the same theorem, i.e. to question the belief in the immutability of particular norms, was also essential from the perspective of progression. This is what the lawsuit itself is intended to serve with its adversarial structure, which is a practical manifestation of the clash of values.

Positive jurisprudence – Kelsen in particular – connects diversity to the idea of justice in a way that the social order imposing rights and obligations on a person must disregard some, but not all, differences. In his view, the decisive question is which differences need to be considered and which do not.<sup>33</sup> This can be the basis for the theoretical issues of equal treatment and can also provide a framework for positive discrimination.

Let's start with the fact that social actors are fundamentally different. How can a fair system be created to the benefit of all?

Perhaps Rawls' theory of justice has given the most comprehensive answer. According to him, we can only speak of a just social order if any post, position, rank, office is open to all, and advancement in income, wealth or power is also

<sup>29</sup> Rawls: *A Theory of Justice*, 53.

<sup>30</sup> Tóth: John Rawls, n.d.

<sup>31</sup> Morin quoted by Barcsi: *Az emberi méltóság filozófiája*, 11.

<sup>32</sup> Morin, E. (1999): *Seven complex lessons in education for the future*, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000117740> (accessed 12 December 2019), 11–12.

<sup>33</sup> Kelsen: *Mi az igazságosság?*

open to anyone. This is the first basic condition; the second is that any inequality should bring some benefits to everyone.<sup>34</sup> In other words, it is no longer acceptable for members of a group to suffer any, even a slight disadvantage, whatever the benefit to others. Stating this, Rawls is confronting Bentham and the utilitarians. Thus, he considers the principle of social difference to only be conceived within the framework of total freedom and in such a way that it does not put any group in disadvantage.

In conclusion, Rawls believes it seems reasonable and generally acceptable that principles should be chosen in order that no one is disadvantaged by natural or social circumstances. The concept of “original position” he coined “is understood as a purely hypothetical situation characterized so as to lead to a certain conception of justice”.<sup>35</sup> The realization of this in turn presupposes a state of equilibrium in which the interests of different social positions, ranks, etc. are balanced, which means that the principles of justice ensure an adequate level of prevalence of each of these interests (relative to one another). This is the idea of the so-called “justice seen as fairness”.<sup>36</sup>

The criterion of social justice does not include discrimination on the basis of protected property, i.e. discrimination based on sex, origin, race, religion, colour, etc. There is no doubt, however, as stated above, that both gender and cultural differences can create wholly natural (biological) or less natural (hereditary) living conditions, which are nonetheless unfavourable. Disadvantages that adversely affect the chances of a particular group, and deprive the members of a particular group of their basic rights, can posteriorly be compensated for in order to help members of society have access to equal opportunities (tutoring, free education, early retirement, scholarships for women who have children, etc. – see also Article 157 TFEU<sup>37</sup>), i.e. the objectively just starting position (with regards to Rawls’ “original position is the appropriate initial status quo”<sup>38</sup>). But these are not related to performance, so from that point it is only their knowledge, insight, learning, decisions that further their place or position in the social space that is most suitable for them.

Illustrated by the chosen subject, it is precisely the constitutional principle of gender equality that *de jure* means equal rights in all spheres of life, that is, fully equal conditions and opportunities. It is however clear that living conditions and the biological differences between the two genders are radically different, noting in particular a woman’s ability to give birth. These natural differences should however not affect the living conditions of women and men

<sup>34</sup> Tóth: John Rawls, n.d.

<sup>35</sup> Rawls: *A Theory of Justice*, 104.

<sup>36</sup> Tóth: John Rawls, n. d.

<sup>37</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/HU/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3Ac10823> (accessed 5 May 2018).

<sup>38</sup> Rawls: *A Theory of Justice*, 11.

and their role in society adversely, and they should above all not lead to discrimination. On the contrary, they should rather contribute to an equal distribution of social, political and economic power in order for it to be suitable for all groups.<sup>39</sup> In summary, this can be interpreted as the principle of freedom and discrimination according to Rawls – i.e. a distributive justice.

As a result, if one group is disadvantaged for the benefit of another group because of one of its protected characteristics, fundamental freedoms are also violated. We also understood that the catalogue of human rights, the declaration of fundamental rights, did not fundamentally solve the problem of gender inequality. Therefore, in order to ensure that human rights are not violated (due to fundamental differences), an anti-discrimination legislation was necessary in practical application as well, covering different forms of discrimination, even considering positive discrimination justified in certain cases.

We are also aware that this problem, along with the question of justice, can (along with quoting the ideas of some theorists and logically analysing them) primarily be grasped as to what fundamental differences social systems need to take into account, and which are those that need to be considered equal according to the universal human concept. This abstract humanist concept and the inclusion of individual differences also provide the basis for the practical regulation and constitutionalization of equal treatment and equal opportunities.

#### LEGAL REGULATION OF EQUAL TREATMENT IN PRACTICE

The rules which prohibit all forms of discrimination against women are sensitive to the principles mentioned in the previous section.

The European Community first enshrined the requirement of equal treatment between men and women in Article 141 (ex. Article, 119) of the Treaty of Rome as a right to “equal pay for equal work”.

Another significant step was the 1979 CEDAW Convention, which sought to combat discrimination in political participation, education, employment, pay, and family law decisions.<sup>40</sup> Hungary, in turn, ratified and introduced it into domestic law by Act X of 1982.

In addition, other legal documents contain provisions for women as well, some of which universally prohibit discrimination. For example, States Parties to the European Social Charter adopted in Turin in 1961 were to select a minimum of 16 of the 38 rights, of which 6 were to be selected from the 9 most important, namely the right to work, equality between men and women, the

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Monori: *Esélyegyenlőség*, 8.

<sup>40</sup> Kovács: *Nemzetközi jog*, 376.

protection of young children, the right to social security, the right to social health care, the right to family protection and the rights of migrant workers.<sup>41</sup>

A real breakthrough on the European continent was the Treaty of Amsterdam, which added new elements to the prohibition of discrimination. Thus, discrimination based on racial, ethnic, religious or other beliefs, disability, age and sexual orientation entered into the regulatory framework. However, this was *exhaustively listed* without the possibility of extension with other features. Furthermore, the chapter did not provide for a subjective right, but an appropriate procedural basis for the Community to take appropriate measures.<sup>42</sup>

In addition, two directives were adopted. Council Directive 2000/43/EC on the application of the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, and Council Directive 2000/78/EC establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation. The purpose of the latter directive is to ensure that everyone in the workplace is treated equally and is not discriminated against on the grounds of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

Several documents set out the requirement of equal treatment in Hungary as well.

Act XX of 1949 (former Constitution) completely rejected gender discrimination in all areas of life, and the 2012 Fundamental Law – replacing the aforementioned – also refers to the prohibition of discrimination. Article XV (2) says that “Hungary shall guarantee the fundamental rights of all persons without discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, sex, disability, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, wealth, birth or other situation.”<sup>43</sup>

Act CXXV of 2003 is also worth mentioning, as it provides for equal treatment in the interest of promoting equal opportunities and social inclusion:

The Parliament recognizes the right of every human being to live as an equal person, guided by its intention to provide effective legal protection to those suffering discrimination, declaring that the promotion of equal opportunities and social inclusion is primarily a State obligation, with respect to the State; as well as the international obligations of the Republic and the *acquis communautaire* of the European Community.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>42</sup> Kazuska: A diszkrimináció tilalma, 212–213.

<sup>43</sup> Magyarország Alaptörvénye.

<sup>44</sup> 2003. évi CXXV. törvény az egyenlő bánásmódról és az esélyegyenlőség előmozdításáról, <https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=a0300125.tv> (accessed 2 May 2021).

## WHY IS THERE EVEN A NEED FOR POSITIVE DISCRIMINATION?

However, in addition to the need for freedom in all areas and the requirement for equal treatment, there are areas where some legislators felt the need for positive discrimination in order to ensure that fundamental rights were not undermined.

In this way, the conventions on discrimination that have already adopted positive discrimination have played an important role in the UN's human rights work. Particularly in the areas of economics, social law and racial discrimination (e.g. CERD – Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination).<sup>45</sup>

The provisions on positive discrimination primarily concerned the protection of minorities, and regulations about women cannot be considered as such under the auspices of international conventions on the protection of minorities. It should nonetheless be noted that women, while not really belonging to a minority, have a political minority identity, like other members of lower status groups, “identified with the” common destiny “created by discrimination and efforts [...]”<sup>46</sup> In other words, “the situation of women is sociologically comparable to other socially disadvantaged groups.”<sup>47</sup> As a result, they are, in some respects, similarly affected by the need for positive discrimination as other minority groups. Legislators have therefore decided to accept positive discrimination to remedy past negative discrimination in women's cases where appropriate.

Positive discrimination relative to women is enshrined, inter alia, in Article 119 (4) of the Treaty of Amsterdam, Article 141 TEC, now Article 157 (4) TFEU. In other words, States Parties may, in addition to the principle of equal treatment, maintain or adopt measures to the benefit of certain persons in order to make it easier for the underrepresented sex to pursue a professional activity or to prevent or compensate for disadvantages in their careers.<sup>48</sup> This article has been taken up in a shorter form by Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

In the spirit of this Treaty (Article 119 (2) and (3) and (4) of the Treaty on European Union, “Equality between women and men must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay. The principle of equality shall not prevent the maintenance or adoption of measures providing for specific advantages in

<sup>45</sup> Kovács: *Nemzetközi jog*, 375.

<sup>46</sup> Becker–Wagner quoted by Kovács, M. – Szabó, M.: Társadalmi nem és szexizmusok: a nemi hierarchiát igazoló nézetrendszerek elfogadása és elutasítása, in Kovács, M. (ed.): *Társadalmi nemek: elméleti megközelítések és kutatási eredmények*, Budapest, ELTE Eötvös, 2017, 39–57, 41.

<sup>47</sup> Neményi quoted in Acsády, J.: „Megtettük-e azt, amit az eszményeink szerint meg kellett volna, hogy tegyünk?” Az államszocializmus demokratikus ellenzékének elmaradt nőemancipáció-reflexióiról, *socio.hu. Társadalomtudományi Szemle*, 6(2), 2016, 176.

<sup>48</sup> Monori: *Esélyegyenlőség*. 158.

favour of the under-represented sex.<sup>49</sup> In the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) and as a result of the democratic process, efforts to promote gender equality have been put forward through legal regulations, even in science. In other words, the EU is determined to eliminate inequalities and actively promote equality between men and women in science as well, and it applies positive discrimination to this end. To promote gender equality in science, the European Union established a women's science department in 1998. It has also set up the "Helsinki Group" of Member States' representatives to coordinate policies on these issues across Europe. The practical implementation of positive discrimination relative to women is represented by the program allowing for women to get two more years to complete any application related to age or the deadline for obtaining an academic degree if they have a child under the age of 10. In the case of female educators, the age limit for children is postponed by two years. This was an important step towards addressing the structural disadvantage of women.<sup>50</sup>

The possibility of positive discrimination is also explicitly provided in the Hungarian Fundamental Law (Article XV, paragraph 4.5). It is based on the principle of equity, which we have already outlined. It is known that discrimination would occur if something (right, benefit, etc.) were to be favourable for everyone, but that would not benefit anyone. However, in the case of positive discrimination, the beneficiary will receive some form of entitlement even though it is not due to others. However, positive discrimination can only be justified by the creation of equal opportunities and the realization of social inclusion, so the benefits cannot be distributed arbitrarily. Families, children, women, the elderly and people with disabilities receive special protection, but in their case, this positive discrimination only offers a chance of catching up and in no way replaces performance.

It can be seen therefore, that the true equality of opportunity based on the principle of equity has been ensured by both national and international regulations of contractual value, as well as the so-called soft law rules. That is why it is necessary to look more closely at why, in practice, there is still discrimination between the genders.

Nota bene, all of these efforts, the success in applying various legal documents can be considered only together with their evolutive interpretation, and the different scope and speed of implementation in states with different religious and cultural backgrounds and with different interpretational frameworks also

<sup>49</sup> EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, Article 23 – Equality between women and men, <https://fra.europa.eu/en/eu-charter/article/23-equality-between-women-and-men> (accessed 11 December 2019).

<sup>50</sup> Pető, A.: A nő a tudományban, *Magyar Tudomány*, 2018/04. Retrieved from [https://mersz.hu/dokumentum/matud\\_\\_173](https://mersz.hu/dokumentum/matud__173) (accessed 12 December 2019).

have to be taken into account. Thus, more radical, positive changes in women's rights have so far occurred mainly in Western democratic states.

ASK "THE WOMAN QUESTION", THE WOMAN PERSPECTIVE IN LAWMAKING.  
 "THE LAW IS MALE" – OR WHY ARE DE JURE RIGHTS APPLICATIONS STILL  
 PROBLEMATIC IN PRACTICE? EXCERPTS FROM CRIMINAL AND LABOUR LAWS

*Everything that men have written about women should be  
 viewed with suspicion, because they are both judge and party.*<sup>51</sup>

This far, we have seen that by covering all areas of social co-existence, regulations have created equality before the law, prohibited discrimination, enforced equal treatment, and some regulations have even provided opportunities for positive discrimination. In practice, however, neither equal treatment nor equal opportunities can prevail in the majority of the cases. Highlighting the reasons for this is thus worth the effort. I intend to point out the practical legal anomalies that are observed in the application of the law and that are detrimental to women.

It is known that there is an eternal conflict between the static validity and the dynamic factual process of the law.<sup>52</sup> However, from a women's point of view, the problem is not with this, but with similar cases being treated differently, based in many cases on gender differences and the resulting discrimination, the traditional stereotypes. It is therefore difficult to recover from violations against women. This also makes it plausible that, for women, the law is sometimes a symbol of imperfection, of dependence on power factors and not of justice.

I have to start from the assumption that maintaining the status quo is based upon the inherent masculinity of powerholders and the legal system, and therefore the phrasing and content of the law is based on a "male standard" and is underpinned by male experience ("the law is male"). This means that when the law is to be applied to women, it often results in questionable, often unfair solutions.<sup>53</sup> To this end, jurisprudence has developed many forms of female perspectives and feminist aspirations ("feminist jurisprudence"). An example of this is the Critical Legal Studies movement, whose core objective

<sup>51</sup> Poulain de la Barre quoted by Beauvoir, de S.: *A második nem*, Budapest, Gondolat, 1971.

<sup>52</sup> Bihari, Zs.: Dráma a jogelméletben – Horváth Barna géniuszai, *Jogi Tanulmányok 2014*, 204–214.

<sup>53</sup> Sebestyén, A.: Kísérlet a hazai joggyakorlat feminista jogelméletek szemszögéből való elemzésére, *Jogi Tanulmányok*, 17(1), 2014, 260–268.

is to change the rules that fundamentally affect social relations by changing the epistemological and political aspects of the existing legal approach. Critical Legal Studies has developed many sub-disciplines, the most radical of which is the so-called feminist theory of law. The basic idea of the latter is that state and legal institutions have male-centred power and are biased towards the male sex.<sup>54</sup>

The most striking examples of this is, on the one hand, the application of criminal law – this is the area that best illustrates the validity of theoretical statements and criticisms –, and, on the other hand, the field of labour law. While discrimination can be observed mainly related to wages and women’s childbearing in the latter case, criminal law rules and sanctions are discriminatory in the treatment of violent crimes against women, so that redress cannot be applied in a fair manner. According to feminist jurists, criminal justice does not take into account the specificity of women and does not ask the question of women, meaning that the theorem that “the law is male” can also primarily be seen through this. In the first version of the next chapter,<sup>55</sup> I introduced the potential for decoding gender discrimination in the workplace, and the obstacles women can face when attempting to advance in the institutional hierarchy. Below, I will discuss the area of criminal law in more detail, while I will only tangentially deal with the issue of labour law, mentioning two legal cases. As I have stated, criminal law situations are often discriminatory when applied to women, so the phenomenon basically occurs as a human rights issue, and mentioning it is thus inevitable. The following examples refer mainly to Hungarian criminal law, but in principle, the “logic” and method inherent in them can be found in some form in most jurisdictions.

#### HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE ARBITRAL TRIBUNAL

There is a gender-specific problem in cases of domestic violence, legitimate protection, the right to self-determination or violations of the qualification of certain facts. Namely, discrimination is due to the fact that legislation and/or the application thereof is still based on traditional thinking structures (patriarchy theory), traditional relationships that have long become obsolete, and may even violate fundamental rights. The most poignant example would be the mandatory “evaluation” of victim proneness. This is a requirement that

<sup>54</sup> Mádi, S.: Egy amerikai radikális feminista gondolatai a nemek közötti egyenlőtlenségről – Catharine A. MacKinnon: *A feminizmus változásai. Előadások életről és jogról, Debreceni Jogi Műhely*, Vol. X, No. 2, 2013, 98–103.

<sup>55</sup> Takács, I.: Women at the top leadership positions. Obstacles, possibilities and the chimera of segregation, *IJPINT*, 2018, 5(1), 74–84.

today requires women to have an ethical attitude that has long been out-moded at the level of society as a whole.<sup>56</sup>

It is true that the law states that (a) the offending conduct of the victim does not, in itself, mean that resistance to violence is not serious (BH 1993, 281). At the same time, the law also states that: “The alleged involvement of the victim is an attenuating circumstance. This may include gross, violent, defiant or grossly abusive behaviour or unlawful conduct; violation of the rights of the victim; light-hearted, defiant behaviour in relation to sexual freedom and sexual crimes.”

The problem, in this case, can only arise from the fact that in the relevant section it mentions frivolous defiant behaviour, which can be assessed as “subjectively objective”. The latter implies that the interpretation of the law often conceals the traditionally based value judgment (sexism) of women in society, so that the judiciary practice directly or indirectly reflects the aforementioned social beliefs.

As Andrea Sebestyén wrote referring to this: “a decent woman does not dress provocatively, does not walk alone on dark streets, or does not go to clubs where there is a significant majority of men etc.”<sup>57</sup> Argumentation of this nature identifies with the viewpoint of the male utilizing the opportunity, and women are blamed for being a victim. This is a serious mistake in her view, and also raises the suspicion that women’s freedom of sexual self-determination is not recognized. The expectation may violate a fundamental right, all things considered. The traditional requirement for women in this sense is restraint, passivity and abstinence.<sup>58</sup>

This is also confirmed by the statement that “tricks” of the authorities include a procedure aimed at the “disappearance” of the abuser and the redirection of the investigation onto the victim. As Olga Tóth has pointed out, this mechanism makes use of all possible means of victim-blaming, with the investigation ultimately focusing on the victim’s behaviour rather than the perpetrator and the act. Not infrequently, they focus on investigating how the victim’s habits prior to the crime may have caused the particular tort. Moreover, abused women find themselves confronted with a situation where law enforcement officers do not even believe them because of the gender stereotypes.

It can thus be concluded that there are clearly structural causes of violence against women, which reflect the archaic male–female relationship (manifestations of male-dominance), unequal power relations between the sexes, and shed light on long-overdue habits even to this day. Since similar opinions have

<sup>56</sup> Sebestyén: *Kísérlet a hazai joggyakorlat...*, 260–268.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*, 265.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. *ibidem*.

existed for centuries regarding the norms that form the relationship between the two sexes, it can easily seem that they are non-discriminatory, but natural. Thus they are embedded in everyday discourse, becoming part of our construction of reality. This provides the basis for so-called structural violence, which is in line with these cultural norms, values, even sexism. As a result – as I have already mentioned –, the case-law often refers to these traditional values or even to religious beliefs as a justification for violence against women, which obstructs fairness in redress in itself.<sup>59</sup>

Therefore, it can also be stated that the traditionally expected roles of women and men and the permissive position of society in relation to violence against women also contribute to the persistence of violence.<sup>60</sup> This could lead to some forms of violence against women (domestic violence) being perceived as less than real, or not being judged as clearly (rendered invisible, exacerbated) as other forms of violence.<sup>61</sup>

In order to clarify these boundaries and to avoid “belittling cases”, it is very important to establish precise criteria for consent – in addition to the victim’s involvement – in sexual offences against women, unless the victim is not defending her own situation. Above and beyond the case when the victim fails to defend themselves due to the complete hopelessness of their situation. On this basis, under Article 36 of the *Istanbul Convention* adopted by the *Council of Europe*, Member States shall ensure that unlawful acts of a sexual nature need to be sanctioned, and they shall take all the necessary legislative measures to this end. In addition, the *Convention* addresses criteria that exhaust the concept of consent. According to this, consent is voluntary and based on the free will of the individual and its evaluation takes into account all the circumstances of the case.<sup>62</sup> In addition, it extends to acts against former or current spouses or former or current partners recognized by domestic law.

All in all, the problem is that discrimination and injustice are most prominent in procedural practice. Gábor Monori has explained that a woman who is constantly being abused has to face unjustified difficulties, not only because of the slowness of Hungarian administrative procedures, but also because legal decisions often do not provide effective protection for abused women – this is underpinned by several, currently handled cases as well. As long as the abusive husband can be expected to be let into the condominium, given that they are also entitled to use it, women will not report the abuser, as they can quite rightfully fear that they will be worse off after filing it. For this reason,

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Monori: *Esélyegyenlőség*, 42.

<sup>60</sup> Tóth: A nők elleni..., 18.

<sup>61</sup> Monori: *Esélyegyenlőség*, 43.

<sup>62</sup> Dr. Bérces, V.: A sértett magatartásának büntetőjogi relevanciájáról: beleegyezés, közrehatás, utólagos hozzájárulás, *Büntetőjogi Szemle*, (2), 2017, 51–70.

the primary focus of remedies, Monori writes, is that no civil law claim (home-ownership, etc.) should override women’s human rights, the rights to life, and to physical and mental health.<sup>63</sup>

In all fairness, criminal law has coercive measures that may assist in the initiation of criminal proceedings. The judge may decide to keep the defendant away from certain persons, to leave the condominium and to keep their distance from the victim’s workplace. In case of any violation, they may be placed in pre-trial detention, as there is no other way to prevent repeat offences (cf. Law LXXII of 2009 on Domestic Violence Offences, which, in addition to addressing the concept of domestic violence, details preventive distance as well).

However, it is a question of how and in what ways these can be applied in court practice, whether they assess the relationship between the victim and the abuser, the mental state of the offender and the victim, and whether the actual and/or special situation of women is taken into account (if she is/can be threatened in the case of forgiveness, for example).

In addition to this, it should be noted that, as a result of legal developments, an independent criminal law situation has emerged: “relationship violence”, which came into force with the new Criminal Code in 2013 and has already had visible results. “As of 2018, 205 convictions have been issued for violence against women. This does not mean that more violence has taken place since then [since 2013], but that those who are being abused have greater courage to deal with such situations, so independent statutory law has helped.”<sup>64</sup> However, latency remains high and, in many cases, real data regarding violent acts in relationships is only revealed through obituaries.

Public (structural) causes also play a role when, for example, domestic violence occurs to a man. At the same time, violence against men occurs to a significantly smaller degree, such cases are rarely detected and their outcome is not as serious as the opposite.

Another example comes from criminal law as well, and concerns self-defence against an attacker as an extenuation. In legal terms, defences against provocation and self-defence are exempt from the charge of murder. However, the legal defence of legitimate protection is not exhausted by an act where the woman does not react spontaneously to her husband/partner’s abuse for years, but much later, or well before the next expected attack.<sup>65</sup> Physical differences do not allow for immediate protection for women in most cases, and it thus happens rarely. Since “a legitimate defence situation and action on such can be invoked as a matter of principle if there is an attack, or at least can be

<sup>63</sup> Monori: *Esélyegyenlőség*, 54.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. *Jogászvilág*, 2019, <https://jogaszvilag.hu/napi/a-torveny-a-bantalmazott-mellett-all/> (accessed: 11 November 2019); cf. 2012. évi C. törvény a Büntető Törvénykönyvről, <https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=A1200100.TV> (accessed 23 May 2021).

<sup>65</sup> Monori: *Esélyegyenlőség*, 260–268.

reasonably expected to occur immediately”.<sup>66</sup> If there is no actual assault in the given period of time, the argument for legitimate defence does not apply.

The law does not authorize post-attack defences nor pre-emptive actions well in advance, since once the unlawful attack ends, the legitimate defence situation is terminated. Alternatively, proportionality may also be exceeded, which is a basic requirement as well.

It is nonetheless known that domestic violence is usually not a casual crime, but a long process. Moreover, it can often last for years, be that physical or psychological threats, assault or both (violence can be psychological abuse, verbal abuse, economic violence, physical violence, rape). Research has shown that women who have committed a life-threatening crime in self-defence have long been participating in an abusive relationship to their detriment. As a result, their previous victim status has been transformed into that of the perpetrator, but this is not necessarily taken into account by the authorities in criminal proceedings. “In fact, there was also the case that the court considered being the victim of long-term abuse to be an aggravating circumstance, accusing the woman of not leaving the abusive relationship. Women convicted of a life-threatening crime against their husband or partner have repented despite their grave abuse in the past.”<sup>67</sup>

The issue of establishing justifiable protection is equally problematic in cases of violation of sexual self-determination. For this reason, the institution of self-defence is specifically limited to cases where the parties get into a “fight” situation, or when the abusers break into their apartment at night or armed, so they are not left without the opportunity to a claim.

As far as the issue is concerned, raising the question of women in the context of legitimate protection also seeks to make this form of defence accessible to men and women on equal terms. On the other hand, for the partner who is in perpetual terror to have access to a fair and just remedy.

It is clear that traditional, hierarchical male–female relationships are at the root of violent acts against human rights, and they drive the practice of law enforcement as well. Thus, subjective factors adversely affecting women are equally present in the application of legislation deemed to be objective or equitable, and the masculine nature of the law continues to shine through the proceedings. We could of course continue to line out legal anomalies (abortion, sexual harassment issues, etc.), human rights abuse in criminal proceedings. Psychological and other structural explanations could also be included. The main aim here was, however, to raise awareness of the issues of the theoretically phrased “justice” and the need for legal development based on it. In addition, the aim was to give concrete examples of where women’s questions are

<sup>66</sup> Zsálek, H. (2013): A jogos védelem jelenleg hatályos és a 2013. év július hó 1. napján hatályba lépő új törvényi szabályozásának összehasonlító elemzése, *Themis*, 2013. június (12), 405.

<sup>67</sup> Tóth: A nők elleni..., 18.

most likely to be addressed, and, as Kelsen (1998) puts it, we will answer where and when differences need to be taken into account in the legislative process in order for the law to ultimately be applied fairly.

The question is: Would the sentences differ if the court were to accept and be sensitive to the specific circumstances of women, especially in relation to domestic violence?<sup>68</sup>

#### HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN THE FIELD OF WORK

Gender discrimination can also be observed in the professional field and is most noticeable in the wage gap and during job interviews. In addition, there is discrimination in benefits with regard to atypical work, such as teleworking or part-time work. As part-time work is mainly chosen by women (e.g. those having children), they are also the most affected.

Equal pay legislation was already enshrined in Article 141 of the Treaty of Rome (formerly Article 119). Article 141 (1) states that equal pay shall apply not only to equal work but also to work of equal value. The International Labour organisation founded after the First World War (ILO) must also be mentioned, which now functions as a specialized agency of the United Nations, dealing with the 100 Conventions on Equal Remuneration of Men and Women (1951) and the 111 Convention on Discrimination in Employment or Occupation (1958).

Despite the regulations, the gender wage gap remains a general phenomenon. In the EU, for example, women earn 16.2% less of an hourly wage on average (see Gender pay gap statistics). According to the EUROSTAT report, in Hungary there was a 14.2% earnings gap between women and men in 2017.<sup>69</sup>

*The petitioner was a public employee active in the area of work, fire and property protection. She had been working as a team leader for years. She complained that her pay was lower than that of her colleagues working in the same area, and she assessed that her female gender was the reason.*

*Based on the above, the Authority concluded that the petitioner was not awarded the supplement because of her female gender, which is why it held that the employer had violated the principle of equal treatment with respect to the petitioner.<sup>70</sup>*

<sup>68</sup> Monori: *Esélyegyenlőség*, 64.

<sup>69</sup> More about the issue of the gender pay gap, see: Simonovits, B. – Szeitl, B. (2018): *Nők és férfiak helyzete – nemzetközi összehasonlításban*, [https://www.tarki.hu/sites/default/files/trip2018/166-183\\_simonovits\\_szeitl\\_Nok\\_ferfiak\\_helyzete.pdf](https://www.tarki.hu/sites/default/files/trip2018/166-183_simonovits_szeitl_Nok_ferfiak_helyzete.pdf) (accessed 14 November 2019).

<sup>70</sup> EBH/152/2018, <http://84.206.127.9/index.php/hu/jogeset/ebh1522018> (accessed 21 May 2022).

As these problems have been detailed in the next chapter<sup>71</sup> I will simply refer to these phenomena here, and illustrate the circumstances in which this problem occurs with the assistance of legal cases.

Gender discrimination can often be noticed in job advertisements, especially in Hungary. It is true that an employer has the right to choose the appropriate workforce freely, but it cannot set criteria in job advertisements that are not necessary in performing the required tasks (that discriminate based on age or gender). However, gender-based discrimination can occur in both genders, and even the EBA has received complaints regarding discrimination to the disadvantage of men (see case law EBH/357/2018, EBH/291/2018).<sup>72</sup> Yet, women in childbearing age are typically discriminated against; which means they are either not recruited because they are expecting a child or because they can be expected to start a family in the near future. This practice is also in conflict with the law (see Article 33 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights). However, an employer violates the law only if the decision is not based on objective criteria but on gender. This, however, can be difficult to prove, and according to social scientists Carli and Eagly, anti-discrimination legislation should always be enforced at an institutional level.<sup>73</sup>

*The petitioner turned to the Authority because just a few days after she had announced her pregnancy, her employer had terminated her indefinite duration employment contract with immediate effect. The employer justified the termination by arguing that the petitioner had gone on vacation without the approval of the managing director. Correspondingly, the petitioner had been absent without leave and the employer's confidence in her was damaged. The petitioner for her part stated that according to the prevailing practice it had not been necessary to ask the managing director to approve vacations. She had discussed her request with her immediate superior, the store manager.*

*Based on the above, the Authority found that the employer had failed to verify and show in accordance with the requirements laid down in Section 19 (2) of the Ebkvtv that it had complied with the principle of equal treatment in its treatment of the petitioner, and that there was no relationship between the petitioner's motherhood (pregnancy) and the measures taken by the employer (the termination of the petitioner's employment with immediate effect). The aforementioned led the Authority to the conclusion that the employer had violated the principle of*

<sup>71</sup> First version: Takács, I.: Women at the top leadership positions. Obstacles, possibilities and the chimera of segregation. *IJPINT*, 2018, 5(1), 74–84.

<sup>72</sup> Find law cases here: [http://84.206.127.9/hu/jogesetek?field\\_ev\\_target\\_id=50&field\\_vedett\\_tulajdonsag\\_target\\_id=All&field\\_diszkriminacio\\_terulete\\_target\\_id=All&field\\_diszkriminacio\\_tipusa\\_target\\_id=All&sort\\_by=title&sort\\_order=ASC](http://84.206.127.9/hu/jogesetek?field_ev_target_id=50&field_vedett_tulajdonsag_target_id=All&field_diszkriminacio_terulete_target_id=All&field_diszkriminacio_tipusa_target_id=All&sort_by=title&sort_order=ASC) (accessed 21 May 2022).

<sup>73</sup> Eagly–Carli: Women and the Labyrinth.

*equal treatment when he or she had terminated the petitioner's employment with immediate effect following her announcement of her pregnancy. The petitioner had thus suffered direct discrimination in connection with her motherhood (pregnancy), she had been treated less favourably than other persons who were in a comparable position with her but did not possess the same protected characteristic as her.*<sup>74</sup>

One of the major advances in remedies has been Council Directive 97/80/EC of 15 December 1997 on the burden of proof in cases of discrimination based on sex. This, in the case of gender discrimination, shifted the burden of proving that the principle of equal treatment had been infringed from the victim to the accused.

Article 14 of the Treaty of Rome, already mentioned above, in line with ILO resolutions (e.g. ILO Conventions 100, 111 and 156), Article 12 (1) of the Hungarian Labor Code regulates the principle of equal treatment in relation to pay.

The above examples were primarily intended to illustrate the need for a more sophisticated regulation in certain spheres to ensure that equal rights are upheld in practice and that fundamental rights are not undermined. It has become clear that positive discrimination is primarily about eliminating these inequalities.

It can all in all be stated that, despite legal equality achieved through legal regulations, women continue to be disadvantaged in many areas. De facto, women and men still do not have equal opportunities. An approach from a female perspective may be apt to fill the legal gaps. This is a requirement that “an organized community cannot neglect, even if it is very difficult to fulfil and is not the task of the law alone.”<sup>75</sup>

Based on human rights, philosophical, moral, and legal foundations discussed, the chapter addressed the question of women in the practice of law enforcement. All was done to draw attention to equality, which to this day can be regarded as an *ad absurdum* gap with regards to the genders, even though human rights are inalienable in so many cogent laws; or in the hope that the change of law is not “futile movement, but a development that results in the law becoming more and more equitable, moral, and humane.”<sup>76</sup>

<sup>74</sup> EBH/180/2018, <http://84.206.127.9/index.php/hu/jogeset/ebh1802018> (accessed 21 May 2022).

<sup>75</sup> Kazuska: A diszkrimináció tilalma, 225.

<sup>76</sup> Bihari: Dráma a jogelméletben, 213.

# WOMEN IN TOP LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

## Possibilities, obstacles and the chimera of segregation



*Most of us spend most of our days in work organisations that are almost always dominated by men. The most powerful organisational positions are almost entirely occupied by men, with the exception of the occasional biological female who acts as a social man.<sup>77</sup>*

### INTRODUCTION

There are still a lot of female workers who, despite their qualifications and skills, encounter obstacles in their careers. Although it can be established as a fact that the proportion of woman leaders in the developed countries has increased significantly in recent decades, this change has not reached top-level leadership positions, where women are still only sporadically getting in.<sup>78</sup> For instance, despite changes, Hungary only ranked 103rd in the ranking of the Global Gender Gap Index 2017 analysing and comparing 144 countries inter alia on the basis of the gender inequalities in economic participation and opportunities. The result had hardly changed by 2018, when Hungary ranked 102nd among 149 countries.<sup>79</sup>

A higher inflow of women into the labour market began in the 1950s in Western Europe and North America. The segregation of the labour market at that time appeared as a research topic as well, and from the 1970s more and more studies dealt with it. It could be seen that women's and men's work statuses and the opportunities to reach higher positions were completely different.<sup>80</sup> Joan Acker showed that organisations are not gender neutral institutions, but they are permeated by the gendered substructure of society.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Sorenson, quoted by Acker, J.: Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies. A Theory of Gendered organisations, *Gender & Society* 4(2), June 1990, 139.

<sup>78</sup> Monori: *Esélyegyenlőség*, 145.

<sup>79</sup> The Global Gender Gap Report 2017, [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2017.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf) (accessed 30 April 2018).

<sup>80</sup> Nagy, B. – Primecz, H.: Nők és férfiak a szervezetekben. Kísérlet a mítoszok eloszlatására, *Vezetéstudomány* Vol. XLI, No. 2, 2010, 2–17.

<sup>81</sup> Acker quoted by Nagy, B.: Szervezet és nemek, in Kovács, M. (ed.): *Társadalmi nemek: elméleti megközelítések és kutatási eredmények*, Budapest, ELTE Eötvös, 2017, 59.

What is currently at the forefront of the problem is that more women have been placed in leadership positions than before, so it may seem that the system is currently fair and that advancement is based merely on merit and the hierarchy seems easy to permeate.<sup>82</sup>

One of the questions to be answered in the field of research since the 1990s – and what this chapter is about – was the question of why this change is so slow for women’s proportions and why the role of women in top level leadership is symbolic, despite them having the same qualification level and skills as their male colleagues, and despite the proportion of women in higher education being higher (60–40).<sup>83</sup>

The current state of affairs is clearly due to gender segregation. Women in the labour market are burdened by both vertical and horizontal segregation.<sup>84</sup> By horizontal segregation, we mean the different positions of men and women in different economic fields, sectors, occupations, which are referred to as the ‘glass walls’ metaphor.

Vertical segregation, which is also spoken of with the term ‘glass ceiling’,<sup>85</sup> includes barriers of advancement on the occupational hierarchy. This phenomenon results in the proportion of women being significantly lower when we look at higher positions. This means that even with the same professional skills, women have a much lower probability of a career than men. The term ‘glass ceiling’ first appeared in the literature in 1986, when Carol Hymowitz and Timothy D. Schellhardt made a report titled *The Glass-Ceiling: Why Women Can’t Seem to Break the Invisible Barrier that Blocks Them from Top Jobs* in the Wall Street Journal.<sup>86</sup>

Katalin Koncz described the ‘glass ceiling’ phenomenon as a “structural deadlock”, which virtually means the end of advancement within an

<sup>82</sup> See also Vida, K. – Kovács, M.: A token helyzet és a meritokrácia illúziója: a kivétel erősíti a szabályt?, in Kovács, M. (ed.): *Társadalmi nemek: elméleti megközelítések és kutatási eredmények*, Budapest, ELTE Eötvös, 2017, 140–170.

<sup>83</sup> See also Nagy–Primecz: Nők és férfiak a szervezetekben.

<sup>84</sup> International comparative analysis shows that gender segregation of the labour market is present in all countries of the world and remains unchanged (Anker [1998], Charles [1992]), “despite the fact that there is an approximation in different approaches of women and men to the labour market and their education”. (Koncz, K.: A munkaerőpiac nemek szerinti szegregációjának jelensége és mérése, *Statistikai Szemle*, 88(10–11), 2010, 1083)

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Lockwood, N. R. (2004): *The Glass Ceiling: Domestic and International Perspectives*, <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.470.6766&rep=rep1&type=pdf> (accessed 5 January 2018). Although the metaphor of the glass ceiling goes back to the 1980s, earlier research, such as the work of Rosabeth Moss Kanter titled *Men and Women of the Corporation* from the 1970s (New York, Basic Books, 1977), showed how different their positions are and how different the tasks of women and men are in organisations. (Nagy, B.: *Szervezet és nemek*, 60.)

<sup>86</sup> Hymowitz, C. – Schellhardt, T. D.: The Glass Ceiling. Why Women Can’t Seem to Break the Invisible Barrier that Blocks them from the Top Jobs, *The Wall Street Journal*, D1, D4–D5, 1986.

organisation, and presents itself when the organisation is unable to ensure any advancement opportunities due to some structural reason.<sup>87</sup>

The reasons for this uneven situation and the segregation at workplaces can be found in the social codes, the centuries-old presence of the male–female hierarchy. It is known that a series of social endeavours, multiple feminist tendencies and initiatives have appeared to change these, that is to “overcome” prejudices about women. With similar or differing methods, these are united by their common goal of preventing biological gender dictating social roles. In other words, both genders should be able to partake in professions or roles they prefer or desire. The key to the required competency is in the individual and is not rooted in the roles determined by the biological gender. However, habits and traditional gender prejudices are deeply embedded in the social sphere, and they directly or indirectly determine the place of women regarding their role in society.

“In the labour market, as in other areas, the psychological explanation of such gender-based differentiation focuses, therefore, on the perceived incompatibility of myths, that is, what it means to be a good leader and what it means to be a woman (defined as opposite to each other) and it is known as ‘think manager–think male’”.<sup>88</sup> The “think manager–think male” (TMTM) association is based on gender inequalities in the workplace.<sup>89</sup>

“That is, the stereotypical attributes of men overlap much more with the notions of a leader than stereotypes about women do. It is, therefore, difficult for women to gain access to these high status areas with political-economic powers and prestige, because these prejudices make women less likely to be fit for these occupations.”<sup>90</sup>

Gender-related segregation of the labour market is linked to such and similar social value judgement and therefore means a social problem, as “the principle of meritocracy (if we emphasize gender equality) or the special contribution and value of women (if we keep in mind the differences between the two genders) cannot be realized.”<sup>91</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Koncz, K.: A munkaerőpiac nemek szerinti szegregációjának jellemzői, mechanizmusa és következményei, *Közgazdasági Szemle*, Vol. LVIII, January 2011, 74–94; Koncz, K. (2016a): A női karriertípusok és jellemzőik, *Opus et Educatio* 3(1), 2016, 30–39.

<sup>88</sup> E.g. Agars, 2004; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, Block, Martell & Simon, 1989; Schein, 1973, 1975 quoted by Ryan, M. K. – Haslam, S. A. – Hersby, M. D. – Bongiorno, R.: Think crisis–think female. The glass cliff and contextual variation in the think manager–think male stereotype, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 96(3), 2011, 470.

<sup>89</sup> In addition, let’s just remember that care for example, which is regarded as a part of women’s nature on a biological basis by society, cannot be transformed into social status at all. But the care of a woman is needed by the dominant group – preferably without remuneration – so it has become part of the “expectations” of the female role (see Glick–Fiske 2006 quoted by Vida–Kovács: A token helyzet, 143).

<sup>90</sup> Ibidem, 145.

<sup>91</sup> Nagy–Primecz: *Nők és férfiak a szervezetekben*, 14.

The topic includes the above-mentioned horizontal segregation, the changing but sharp separation of the feminine versus masculine professions. It is known that women are overrepresented in the social sphere, but there are still few in the technical and natural sciences.

According to Katalin Koncz, however, the separation of genders by profession is not unnatural because of the different competences and opportunities of women and men due to biological and social reasons.

She basically suggests that inequalities are actually not caused by segregation.<sup>92</sup> At the same time, I need to mention “that the essentialist argument on the difference between men and women nevertheless maintains paradoxically the hierarchy it seeks to break down. It reaffirms the category boundaries between groups, and the assumption that members of the groups – irrespective of the nature of the assessment – are essentially different”<sup>93</sup>

The problem, as Koncz says, is nevertheless much rather in labour market mechanisms,<sup>94</sup> shaping these natural differences, and the occupational structure manifesting itself from that as a social disadvantage.<sup>95</sup>

This bears significance, however, as the jobs done by men result in higher prestige. In addition, the difference is also reflected in the salary – the gender pay gap is clearly to the remarkable advantage of men. The topic is only affected by the fact that there are few women in managerial positions, whether in female or male professions or sectors. It is proved primarily by men being leaders even in an industry or organisation overrepresented by women. This phenomenon is referred to in literature as the ‘glass elevator/escalator’.

In her study titled *Racializing the glass escalator: Reconsidering men’s experiences with women’s work*<sup>96</sup> Aida Harvey Wingfield describes all men working in predominantly or exclusively female professions feeling this particular glass escalator effect. This is what makes their upward mobility easier and quicker even in these fields. The glass escalator model was thus an effective paradigm for understanding the experiences of men doing female jobs.

<sup>92</sup> Koncz: *A munkaerőpiac nemek szerinti szegregációjának jellemzői*, 74.

<sup>93</sup> See Phillips 2010 quoted by Kovács–Szabó: *Társadalmi nem és szexizmusok*, 44.

<sup>94</sup> “This is confirmed by the latest North American studies, which show that men with an active, intense father role report the same degree of work–life conflict as active mothers on the labour market (Williams et al. 2013). Williams and his associates approached the issue of why organisational practices are not questioned from organisational engagement rather than organisational structure (Williams et al. 2013). In North American research, a summary shows that the moral expectation of commitment to work conflicts with the general need for a worker to work flexibly, even if class attributes are taken into account (Williams et al. 2013)” (Nagy: *Szervezet és nemek*, 65).

<sup>95</sup> Koncz: *A munkaerőpiac nemek szerinti szegregációjának jellemzői*, 75.

<sup>96</sup> Wingfield, A. H.: *Racializing the Glass Escalator – Reconsidering Men’s Experiences with Women’s Work*, *Gender & Society*, 23(1), 2009, 5–26.

The concept itself was created by American sociologist Christine Williams in 1992 in the article titled *The Glass Escalator: Hidden Advantages for Men in the “Female” Professions*,<sup>97</sup> and was identified in her research of male nurses, social workers and librarians. The metaphor was identified as evidence of consistent male advantage in these workplaces. That is, even in jobs where men have numerical minorities, they are likely to receive higher wages and move faster up the ladder than female employees.<sup>98</sup> Williams has since built her own concept further in *The Glass Escalator, Revisited: Gender Inequality in Neoliberal Times, SWS Feminist Lecturer*<sup>99</sup> (2013), primarily referring to certain insufficiencies the analogy was not fit to fully grasp. In the scientific discourse, a number of studies dealt with the glass elevator phenomenon she used, and *The Glass Escalator: Hidden Advantages for Men in the “Female” Professions* has been mentioned in dozens of textbooks, quoted more than 500 times in scientific articles and appeared in other places related to the subject.<sup>100</sup>

Williams mentioned two major limitations of the concept. First, it could not handle intersectionality adequately, as it does not take the cross-section of race, sexual orientation and class into consideration, and only addressed experiences of white, middle class cis men. It is clear that black or gay men do not necessarily enjoy the benefits of a glass elevator. Williams refines the phenomenon further when mentioning that the term ‘white solipsism’ coined by Adrienne Rich, which states that the “white” experience is the norm, mean and model of any and all other demographics, means that anyone diverging from the “white” norm can be considered an “exception”. The other issue with the term glass elevator was that it is rooted in the structure of traditional work organisations, which have changed significantly since then. The phenomenon presumes stable employment conditions, a bureaucratic hierarchy which can be observed by state-supported public institutions (educational institutions, libraries, etc.). Although these strictly structured organisations are not characteristic to the labour market anymore, workplaces are more flexible, project-based and transitory currently.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>97</sup> Williams, C. L.: The glass escalator: Hidden advantages for men in the “female” professions, *Social Problems*, 39(3), 1992, 253–267, <https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.1992.39.3.03x0034h>

<sup>98</sup> Floge–Merrill, 1986; Heikes, 1991; Pierce, 1995; Williams, 1989, 1995 quoted by Wingfield. White men in women’s professions are who mostly meet the glass escalator phenomenon, which helps occupational mobility (for exception see Snyder and Green 2008), only a handful of studies deal with it being not only a gender advantage, but also a racial privilege. (Wingfield: Racializing the Glass Escalator, 6)

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Williams, C. L.: The Glass Escalator, Revisited: Gender Inequality in Neoliberal Times, SWS Feminist Lecturer, *Gender & Society*, 27(5), 2013, 609–629, [https://www.jstor.org/stable/43669820?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/43669820?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents)

<sup>100</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>101</sup> Ibidem.

Scientists researching the field pointed out that, as opposed to the vertically structured, rigidly hierarchic work organisation of the old Fordist models, postmodern organisations are reacting to the changing opportunities of society by emphasising flexibility and focusing on one or a few main activities, while all side activities are outsourced to other providers. As a result, modern organisations have significantly fewer organisational levels, they are much “flatter” and therefore less hierarchic than the “Fordist pyramids”. They also allow for atypical labour relations.<sup>102</sup> The organisational ladder therefore has to be addressed differently to those areas following traditional models of hierarchical advancement.

We need new concepts to understand workplace gender inequalities in the 21st century, regardless of the fact that the old models are still typical to social workers, librarians, etc.<sup>103</sup>

As we have discussed above, women face a chimera of problems during their careers, and this is supported by patriarchal traditions from all sides.

This chapter takes into account the general characteristics of workplace organisation, their atmosphere and prejudices based on binary oppositions identified by leading women, which limit them to this day.

The career path of women is the focus of the chapter, more specifically the difficulties they encounter when they move up the employment hierarchy, or if they want a career in science, a leadership position.

#### THE CHIMERA OF SEGREGATION

My starting point is therefore that the modernisation of organisations since the 1950s has not solved the problems of women’s careers. Furthermore, we are not merely talking about one or two obstacles, but we are faced with an extremely complex, multifaceted phenomenon. Despite the fact that women are overrepresented in many professions (even in formerly male professions, such as law or medicine) and, as I mentioned in the introduction, the proportion of women leaders in the western countries has also increased considerably, these numbers hide the fine details that prove what difficulties and choices a woman has to face to have top level, decision-making leadership positions. No matter what organisation we consider, within each of them “there are everyday habits and processes that reproduce inequalities, reinforce and present

<sup>102</sup> Kürtösi, Zs.: *A nők és férfiak társadalmi kapcsolathálózatának eltérései a munkaszervezetben*. PhD thesis, 2008, [http://phd.lib.uni-corvinus.hu/352/1/kurtosi\\_zsofia.pdf](http://phd.lib.uni-corvinus.hu/352/1/kurtosi_zsofia.pdf) (accessed 9 May 2018), 29–30.

<sup>103</sup> Williams: *The Glass Escalator, Revisited*, 624.

stratified inequalities as unequivocal. [...] The result of these processes is the unquestionable nature of the situation”.<sup>104</sup>

Listing and describing these processes and phenomena can help in creating solutions. For this reason, additional metaphors have been added to the concepts of *glass ceiling*, *glass wall*, *glass escalator* mentioned above to further refine this complex phenomenon and more accurately ascertain the number and magnitude of the problems. Thus, in addition to the concepts described above, symbols such as *glass cliff*, *labyrinth*, *critical mass*, *queen bee*, *gate guard*, *Matilda effect*, etc. have appeared. Although not all of them will be detailed separately, the list of obstacles will include the content of each metaphor.

To sum up all this, the fundamental problem is that the obstacles behind these metaphors still either (1) cause great difficulties for women in their progress or (2) stop them forever in their self-fulfilment in the world of work and science, leading to their dropping out.

#### SELF-DISCRIMINATION AND LABYRINTH

“Vertical segregation causes, for example, that women themselves do not choose certain occupations, jobs, or fields of science, even though they can do so, that is, they may be victims of ‘self-discrimination’”.<sup>105</sup> Thus, the glass ceiling phenomenon – that can be read about in the study *Nők és férfiak a szervezetben – Kísérlet a mítoszok eloszlatására* [Women and Men in the Organisation – An Experiment to Dispel Myths] – is not necessarily an external, objective obstacle, but rather an internal one, and therefore it may also create a semblance of free choice. By all means, it further justifies my conclusion that the segregational factors are extremely close and mutually interrelated, and they result in women getting stuck or dropping out at some point in their careers.<sup>106</sup>

For example, a more adequate term for the problem is the so-called *labyrinth*. This contemporary metaphor illustrates the difficult journey full of conflicts that awaits women in the workplace and in career advancement. “Passage through a labyrinth”, as Carli and Eagly write in the study *Women and the Labyrinth of Leadership*, “requires persistence, awareness of one’s progress, and a careful analysis of the puzzles that lie ahead. Because all labyrinths have a viable route to the centre, it is understood that goals are attainable.” According to Carli and Eagly, “if we can understand the various barriers that make up this labyrinth, and how some women find their way around them, we can work more effectively to improve the situation.”<sup>107</sup>

<sup>104</sup> Nagy: *Szervezet és nemek*, 59.

<sup>105</sup> Anker et al., quoted by Nagy–Primecz: *Nők és férfiak a szervezetekben*, 8.

<sup>106</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>107</sup> Eagly–Carli: *Women and the Labyrinth*.

## WHAT OBSTACLES IS THE LABYRINTH BUILT OF?

The present chapter has already listed some of the obstacles women face. I will name these one by one below, highlighting the specificities of academic careers.

Carli and Eagly present four clearly defined obstacles, (I) disadvantages due to preconceptions, (II) refusal of female leadership, the issue of leadership style, (III) the difficulties of reconciling career and family life and (IV) the lack of social capital investment.<sup>108</sup>

Beáta Nagy elaborated on these barriers and divided them into (1) preconceptions, (2) questioning the competence of women, (3) non-supportive leadership style, (4) the difficulties of reconciling career and family life, (5) lack of social capital, (6) the scientific career model being tailored to men, (7) the “Matthew effect” and (8) the “Matilda effect”, (9) the self-esteem of men being generally higher than their actual performance, while that of women being lower, (10) the role of media, (11) the “chilling climate”, (12) “benign sexism”.<sup>109</sup> These are discussed in detail below. Not in this sequence, but classifying the obstacles based on whether they occur before breaking through the glass ceiling or whether they threaten only women already holding leadership positions.

## OBSTACLES BEFORE THE GLASS CEILING

As has been mentioned several times, prejudice, social codes (i.e. the fact that women and men behave, speak etc. differently and thus have a different role in society) are one of the cornerstones of gender-related myths. They are in practice most likely to be found on the labour market and, as Beáta Nagy points out, they are reflected in the first salaries after graduation (gender pay gap). In science, it can be observed after obtaining a doctorate, mostly in the United States. It suggests that this phenomenon is present at the academic level as well. The paper titled *Salaries for female physics faculty trail those for male colleagues* published in the 2017 November issue of *Physics Today*<sup>110</sup> collected the reasons and phenomena that may be the backbone of wage differences among scholars.

Among other things, it was stated that among academics in the USA, but also in some countries of the European Union, there is a clear evidence of gender-based discrimination.

<sup>108</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>109</sup> Nagy, n. d., see MTA’s “Women in science” roundtable conference: *Áttörni az üvegplafont, kijutni az útvessztőből – „Nők a tudományban” kerekasztal az Akadémián*, [https://mta.hu/mta\\_hirei/attorni-az-uegplafont-kijutni-az-utvesztobol-elsokent-ult-ossze-a-nok-a-tudomanyban-kerekasztal-az-akademian-107103](https://mta.hu/mta_hirei/attorni-az-uegplafont-kijutni-az-utvesztobol-elsokent-ult-ossze-a-nok-a-tudomanyban-kerekasztal-az-akademian-107103) (accessed 9 May 2019).

<sup>110</sup> Feder, Toni: *Salaries for female physics faculty trail those for male colleagues*, *Physics Today*, 17 November 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1063/PT.3.3760>.

In physics men earn, on average, 18% more than women, according to a survey by the Statistical Research Center (SRC) at the American Institute of Physics. The survey looked at people who received their PhD in physics in the US in 1996, 1997, 2000, or 2001. After accounting for other factors, such as employment sector, postdoctoral experience, and age, a 5.7% disparity persists. That difference is attributable to sex, say the data analysts. The model says that if we have two people who are identical in every way, the woman will make, on average, 6 percent less than the man. [...] A host of observations and studies boil down to two contributing factors in the pay disparity. The first is that women don't negotiate as aggressively as men. The second is that men favour each other, which affects recommendations to serve as an editor or chair a committee, [which will initially lead to higher salaries] (*Physics Today*, November 2017).<sup>111</sup>

In Southern European countries (same as in Hungary) it is not possible to talk about salary differences for professors, since "salaries are set nationally, so the problem is not in comparing salaries, but rather in comparing career progression" and its time comparison. Thus, after all, the difference in pay in this case is that women in a lower status earn less money.<sup>112</sup> "For sure men have a faster career, and most men entering the profession reach the top, they become full professors. Women more often get stuck, typically at the associate professor level. The reasons", as the paper suggests, "are rooted in deep cultural patterns."<sup>113</sup>

It is also closely related to the question of the competence of women in certain professions (with high prestige and/or salary). One of its visible forms appears as early as during the job interview. However, very few studies have been written about women's (and men's) behavioural attitudes and language use in job interviews despite the fact that the first major step in career development is the job interview.<sup>114</sup> Therefore, Daniela Wawra's book *Männer und Frauen im Job Interview*<sup>115</sup> is extremely interesting, which states that the applied language of men and women differ significantly. These differences were also described and explained interdisciplinarily by linguistics, social sciences, genetics and evolutionary psychology, as well as from an economic point of view (examining English language and culture). She argues that basically these are the reasons behind the discrimination. The paper also pointed out that

<sup>111</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>112</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>113</sup> See: Whitten, B. – Foster, S. – Duncombe, M.: What Works for Women in Undergraduate Physics?, *Physics Today*, September 2003, 46; and see also in *Physics Today*, August 2005, 29.

<sup>114</sup> Source: Dietz, T. (2005): *Frauen und Männer verhalten sich im Bewerbungsgespräch unterschiedlich*, <http://www.uni-passau.de/bereiche/presse/pressemeldungen/meldung/detail/frauen-und-maenner-verhalten-sich-im-bewerbungsgespraech-unterschiedlich/> (accessed 5 January 2018).

<sup>115</sup> Wawra, Daniela: *Männer und Frauen im Job Interview – Eine evolutionspsychologische Studie zu ihrem Sprachgebrauch im Englischen*, Münster, LIT Verlag, 2004.

there is a risk that women, particularly due to their use of language, suffer discrimination during admission talks. As a result, the issue also has an economic aspect, as these organisations may potentially lose those who are objectively the best for the position. This could be the case because most HR managers do not know the language differences between men and women, the language use of applicants is thus often measured in male “norms”, and differences are usually interpreted as weaknesses (see also “white solipsism”<sup>116</sup>). However, if they were already aware of the gender-based differences in language use, they might be able to avoid rejecting those who are professionally the most suitable candidates for that job and could significantly increase the competitiveness of an organisation.<sup>117</sup> This further justifies the argument that merit trails behind only after the matter of sex (even if the stereotype is indirectly present). Beáta Nagy’s research also underpins the results of social psychological studies that women becoming leaders in higher numbers is not so much based on individual abilities as it is on social conditions.<sup>118</sup>

The judgment of performance, therefore, often differs by the two sexes. This is further substantiated by the so-called “Goldberg paradigm” named after Philip Goldberg’s 1968 experiment. During this, two groups of students had to evaluate the same essays, the only difference being that the first group was told the author was a man, while it has been presented as a work of a woman to the second. The result has shown that the deeply rooted gender prejudices we are discussing ultimately blurred the objectivity of the evaluator. Except for the traditional women’s topics, texts with a female author were evaluated worse than the ones with a male author, despite being in fact the same.<sup>119</sup> The results, therefore, basically show that work attributed to women is rated more negatively than that attributed to men.<sup>120</sup>

Nóra Séllei, in her work *Professzornők a Debreceni Egyetemen* [Women Professors at the University of Debrecen], presented research done at Yale University in 2015, which showed that

<sup>116</sup> As mentioned before, Williams speaks about the concept of “white solipsism” by Adrienne Rich (1979), the notion that *white* experience is the norm, the mean, the model of all other groups. If others differ from the white norm, they are considered to be “exceptions” (Williams: *The Glass Escalator, Revisited*).

<sup>117</sup> Dietz: *Frauen und Männer*.

<sup>118</sup> Nagy, B.: Nők a vezetésben, in Nagy, I. – Pongrácz, T. – Tóth, I. Gy. (eds.): *Szerepváltozások. Jelentés a nők és férfiak helyzetéről 2005*, Budapest, Társi, Ifjúsági, Családügyi, Szociális és Esélyegyenlőségi Minisztérium, 2005, 44–56.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. MacNell, L. – Driscoll, A. – Hunt, A. N.: *What’s in a Name: Exposing Gender Bias in Student Ratings of Teaching. Innovative Higher Education*, 40(4), 2014, 291–303.

<sup>120</sup> See J. K. Swim, E. Borgida, G. Maruyama, D.G. Myers, 1989; M. E. Heilman, 1983; V. Nieva – B. A. Gutek, 1980, quoted by Burgess, D. – Borgida, E.: Who Women are, who women should be. Descriptive and Prescriptive Gender Stereotyping in Sex Discrimination, *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 1999, 5(3), 671.

university professors working in a committee that evaluated applications – women as well as men – consistently overrated applications that had a man’s name on them, compared to those applications which had a woman’s name. As the researchers conclude, [...] it is not about conscious misogyny, probably not even conscious discrimination, but the resulting effect of the stereotypes that society has about women’s roles. In other words, it is about the cultural subconscious that is affected by the hidden curricula of our socialisation. However, from this aspect, it might be less unambiguous to declare that scientific career and advancement would be solely based on the principles of meritocracy.<sup>121</sup>

At the same time, we should not forget that in the social context, gender is not the only cause of discrimination, but there are several other factors which together shape prejudices. For example, physical competence, gender differences in communication, non-verbal communication and other stereotypes.<sup>122</sup> But it seems most of the cases the gender is the main basis of the discrimination (note the ideal worker type).

For women, the most catastrophic obstacle in the labyrinth is the difficulty of reconciling work and private life, which is always a double burden for women. This is fundamentally based on the pressure of family responsibilities, i.e. “women continue to be the ones who interrupt their careers and start working part-time” in the case of childbearing. As a result, they will consequently come to have less work experience, which will significantly slow down their career progress and reduce their earnings.<sup>123</sup> This can be called the “maternity disadvantage”.

The concept of “maternity disadvantage” refers to inequalities (even among women exclusively) affecting only those having childcare duties and thus having severe disadvantages, earning lower salaries or having a higher risk of being discharged.

It is nevertheless true that there are solutions to this, “e.g. in the Nordic countries, studied by Billing, part of the gender regime is that parents are jointly responsible for childcare, so one parent cannot be considered to be completely unencumbered”.<sup>124</sup> We can see the same in the examples of certain Western countries (e.g. France), where involving fathers in the early childhood care of children not only allowed for lessening the burden on women but led to a more positive societal climate as well.<sup>125</sup>

However, as the previous study revealed, in many places, such as in the United States (but also in Hungary), even those women who have shared their

<sup>121</sup> Séllei, N.: Professzornók a Debreceni Egyetemen, *Debreceni Szemle* 2015/3, 261.

<sup>122</sup> Burgess–Borgida: Who Women are, 670.

<sup>123</sup> Eagly–Carli: Women and the Labyrinth.

<sup>124</sup> Billing, quoted by Nagy: Szervezet és nemek, 65.

<sup>125</sup> Pongrácz, T. – S. Molnár, E. (2011): *Nemi szerepek és a közvélemény változásának kölcsönhatása*, <https://www.demografia.hu/hu/letoltes/kiadvanyok/Szerepvaltozasok/192-206Pongracz.pdf> (accessed 8 March 2020).

childcare with their husbands<sup>126</sup> or other family members, etc. did not enjoy full benefits and opportunities at work. Decision makers have often assumed that mothers are inadequate for challenging positions due to their household/home responsibilities. “There were 2 or 3 names [of women] in the hat,” said one of the workers in Carli and Eagly’s research, and they said, ‘I don’t want to talk about her because she has children who are still home in these [evening] hours.’ They don’t mention this matter about the men on the list, many of whom also have children in that age group.”<sup>127</sup> Thus, childbearing as a specific female “problem,” says Nóra Séllei, comes from the fact that our culture tends to take the mother’s primary care role for granted. The professor’s own experience shows that male colleagues are almost never asked about the number of their children, nor how they reconcile their family and career.<sup>128</sup> Thus, basically, the traditional conflict of roles – career or family – specifically affects women.

The family relations of men and women in Hungary are overwhelmingly still governed by the traditional division of roles, because the burden of house-keeping and childcare is for the most part a female responsibility in Hungarian society, even to this day. The attitude studies of the last decades<sup>129</sup> have confirmed that the perception of family and household roles has decisively evolved along the traditional norms and men are still considered heads of the family.<sup>130</sup>

This is closely related to another problem. According to Beáta Nagy “for example, in the presentation of a family-friendly organisation, women are not presented as fully capable employees, but ones requiring help from the workplace, emphasising the notion that women with children need constant assistance in the organisation, as they will otherwise not be able to perform. [...] On the other hand, regardless of whether they are taking flexible work or part-time jobs, women are placed on a ‘mommy track’, meaning they are secondary workers, less committed to their jobs...”<sup>131</sup>

<sup>126</sup> It is worth mentioning how important the partner is from a career perspective “The long-term effects of spousal support and personality on the professional success of respondents, that is, the special appearance of the crossover phenomenon, was analysed through Australian panel data by Solomon and Jackson (2014). The indicator of subjective success was satisfaction with work and the objective success rate was income and progress. Their data showed that regardless of whether a male or female subject was examined, the personality of the spouses had a significant effect on the performance at the workplace (Nagy, B.: *Ki áll a sikeres nő mögött?*, *socio.hu. Társadalomtudományi Szemle*, 2016/2. 123.).

<sup>127</sup> Eagly–Carli: *Women and the Labyrinth*.

<sup>128</sup> Séllei: *Professzornők*, 270.

<sup>129</sup> Blaskó, Pongrácz, quoted in Neményi, M.: *Szülői feladatok és családfenntartás – amikor az anyja a fő kenyérkereső*, *socio.hu. Társadalomtudományi Szemle* 6(2), 2016, 246.

<sup>130</sup> Neményi: *Szülői feladatok*, 243–263.

<sup>131</sup> Nagy: *Szervezet és nemek*, 64.

Accordingly, the ideal worker is in any case an unencumbered employee. Literature (Acker 1990) also calls it a *disembodied worker*, the shape of whom is naturally close to a male worker. For this reason, those who have any nurturing and caring responsibilities – predominantly women – are excluded. According to the model, therefore, employment is a male norm, since it basically creates a system of expectations tailored to men. Essentially, “the concept of a universal worker excludes and marginalizes women who cannot, almost by definition, achieve the qualities of a real worker because to do so is to become like a man”.<sup>132</sup>

It is equally necessary to distinguish the “invisible” segregation based on prejudice from visible physical segregation as a further obstacle.

This is basically a component that plays an important role in workplace organisations in redistributing positions. The basis for this is that men tend to spend a lot of time building up their professional relationships. Thus, this factor becomes an essential part of their work. Some researchers base this phenomenon on human capital theory. As women collect less social capital than men, they are less likely to be in a leadership position.<sup>133</sup>

According to Alice Eagly and Linda L. Carli, social capital has become an essential part of job advancement. “This suggests that social capital is even more necessary to managers’ advancement than skilful performance of traditional managerial tasks.”<sup>134</sup> So executive nominations are made in closed circuits, in the “old men’s club”.<sup>135</sup>

Carli and Eagly describe a similar occurrence with their aforementioned concept of social capital investment. (See obstacle IV: the lack of social capital investment, on page 46.) They state that women generally spend very little time with their peers in their free time, these occasions primarily meaning partaking in certain sports events (hunting, poker, football or other, mainly masculine activities), which women tend not to prefer or are not even allowed to participate in. Although, while these events are officially not considered part of work, it has been proven they provide social capital for men allowing them to further their workplace positions as well.<sup>136</sup> In other words, it can be claimed that social capital is what influences or shapes the redistribution of leadership positions in most cases, not only professional performance.

It has long been recognized that the phenomenon of uneven distribution of nominations and rewards among scholars is common in science (Zuckerman, 1970). This is the so-called “Matthew effect”, which generally speaking, means

<sup>132</sup> Acker quoted, *ibidem*.

<sup>133</sup> Dreher, G. F.: Breaking the glass ceiling: The effects of sex ratios and work–life programs on female leadership at the top, *Human Relations*, 56(5), 2003, 543.

<sup>134</sup> Eagly–Carli: *Women and the Labyrinth*.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Nagy: *Szervezet és nemek*, 60.

<sup>136</sup> Eagly–Carli *Women and the Labyrinth*.

that “eminent scientists get disproportionately great credit for their contributions to science while relatively unknown scientists tend to get disproportionately little credit for comparable contributions”.<sup>137</sup> So, ultimately, the rewards are distributed among people who have already been recognized.<sup>138</sup>

Merton used a quote from the Bible, “for to those who have, more will be given; and from those who do not have, even what they seem to have will be taken away” in his science sociology. Today, this concept is used to describe phenomena where the advantage of favoured groups is reproduced by institutional systems, so they gain additional benefits while the disadvantages of the less favoured people continue to grow.<sup>139</sup> As far as our topic is concerned, it means that women are the ones who are excluded from most rewards.

In addition, women’s scientific efforts are depreciated compared to men.<sup>140</sup> While, for example, the open discrimination in American society is declining, most of the research in social sciences has shown that women’s work and their results are considered less important or less valuable than men’s.<sup>141</sup>

This latter phenomenon was first identified by Margaret W. Rossiter in 1993 and called the “Matilda effect”, according to which women’s scientific work and results are often attributed to their male colleagues or ignored completely.<sup>142</sup> It is important to note here that research has shown not only men have gender prejudices. In fact, both men and women appreciate men more than women, even in case of equal performance.<sup>143</sup>

This is closely related to the fact that men’s self-esteem is generally higher and women’s are lower than their real performance, which can lead to worse results. Steele and Aronson had black and white students take different oral exams in their 1995 surveys, and established that the results of the participants reflected prejudices stemming from typical racial (black vs. white) differences. The survey pointed out that the performance differences experienced were parallel to racial differences, and manifested themselves primarily due to the participants’ fears of reinforcing the negative stereotypes relative to their

<sup>137</sup> Merton, R.: The Matthew Effect in Science, *Science*, Vol. 159, No. 3810, 1968, 56–63, <http://www.garfield.library.upenn.edu/merton/matthew1.pdf> (accessed 21 May 2022).

<sup>138</sup> Lincoln, A. E. – Pincus, S. – Koster, J. – Leboy, P. S.: The Matilda Effect in science: Awards and prizes in the US, 1990s and 2000s, *Social Studies of Science*, 42(2), 2012, 307–320.

<sup>139</sup> See also: Merton: The Matthew Effect.

<sup>140</sup> Long–Fox, quoted by Lincoln et al.: The Matilda, 308.

<sup>141</sup> Goldin–Rouse, 2000; Heilman–Haynes, 2005; Wenneras–Wold, 1997; quoted by Lincoln, et al.: The Matilda, 308.

<sup>142</sup> Knobloch–Westerwick, S. – Glynn, C. J. – Huge, M.: The Matilda Effect in Science Communication. An Experiment on Gender Bias in Publication Quality Perceptions and Collaboration Interest, *Science Communication*, 35(5), 2013, 603–625.

<sup>143</sup> See Correll et al., Steinpreis et al., quoted by Lincoln et al.: The Matilda, 308. The phenomenon resembles the above-mentioned Goldberg paradigm.

ethnic groups. This threat, of the appearance of stereotypes, may have a negative affect on performance.<sup>144</sup>

The stereotype threat theory of Steele and Aronson has been confirmed in relation to other, negatively stereotyped social groups, like the performance of women in the field of mathematics, for example. Mara Cadinu, Anne Maass, Alessandra Rosabianca, and Jeff Kiesner conducted tests on the subject, surveying 60 women divided in two groups, asking them to solve complicated mathematical tasks. Their results, summarized in the study *Why Do Women Underperform Under Stereotype Threat? Evidence for the Role of Negative Thinking*, have shown, among other things, that negative thinking is one of the possible reasons for deficits in performance. Women under the phenomenon called stereotype threat (while they had to complete a difficult task) showed a sharp decrease in performance, which was the result of negative, domain-specific thinking. Thus, they have interiorised qualities assumed to be generally true to a certain demographic (in this case, women).<sup>145</sup>

However, not only the negative, but the positive sex categories are also keeping women in their traditional roles. This is so-called benevolent sexism. The problem with this phenomenon is that women only become accepted in the eyes of society if they have feminine characteristics specific of the group. However, these are completely incompatible with leadership features (see leadership attitudes below).

The reasons we have discussed and their various manifestations are therefore still predominantly present and hinder the career path of women. All these difficulties are further strengthened by the male environment, the “chilling climate”. This is based on the fact that the male majority at a particular workplace creates a “foreign” atmosphere for women, either through the characteristics of the group or the associated physical segregation. Beáta Nagy summarises the situation that women are confronted with when entering the male world in her book *Háttérben*<sup>146</sup> [In the Background]. Among other things, she highlights, for example, Gherardi’s typology of women travellers in a male world, distinguishing their positions as “the guest”, “the marginal”, “the holidaymaker”, “the snake in the grass”, “the newcomer” and “the intruder.”<sup>147</sup>

<sup>144</sup> Cf. Steele, C. M. – Aronson, J.: Stereotype threat and the intellectual test performance of African Americans, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69(5), 1995, 797–811, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.69.5.797>

<sup>145</sup> Cadinu, M. – Maass, A. – Rosabianca, A. – Kiesner, J.: Why do women underperform under stereotype threat? Evidence for the role of negative thinking, *Psychological Science*, 16(7): 5, 2005, 576, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0956-7976.2005.01577.x>

<sup>146</sup> Nagy, B.: *Háttérben*, Budapest, L’Harmattan, 2014.

<sup>147</sup> See Czibere, I. – Takács, I.: Nagy Beáta: *Háttérben*: Kíséret egy szervezeti nemi rend feltárására. Újratervezés – a nők és a műszaki tudományok, *Debreceni Szemle*, 2016/3, 352–356.

Furthermore, the same phenomenon can be experienced even in the Faculty of Humanities, which is considered a feminine field. Nóra Séllei's research based on deep interviews with students of liberal arts found that respondents say this is still a "chivalric" field. Interviewees felt they needed a separate communication strategy to fit in that world.<sup>148</sup>

#### BEYOND THE GLASS CEILING...

Above I have listed the obstacles present before acquiring a leadership position. But the difficulties are not even close to an end. Women who have been able to get out of the labyrinth or break through the glass ceiling are faced with additional difficulties. Such an obstacle is the so-called glass cliff.

Bruckmüller, Ryan, Rink and Haslam studied this relatively new form of gender discrimination in *Beyond the Glass Ceiling: The Glass Cliff and Its Lessons for organisational Policy*.<sup>149</sup> According to this, the glass cliff metaphor refers to the difficulty that women have to face when they acquire leadership positions. Such leadership positions are often much riskier and uncertain for them than for men. Moreover, according to the phenomenon of the glass cliff, the nomination of women is often only made possible because of a risk or uncertainty of the organisation's position. That is, the nomination of women is often a response to a perceived future failure or crisis. Thus, as I wrote in the introduction, the existence of women leaders suggests that the system and the hierarchy is permeable. The fact that it is not permeable can only be visible from behind.

To summarise, the majority of current society recognizes women as good professionals, they are considered to be just as suitable for many positions as men. Not for leading roles in most cases however, so important positions with more responsibilities are still assigned to men.

This resonates with the bureaucratic relationship of expertise and discipline, which considers individual attributes as the ideal type of a good leader (which are men of course). It is true that, on the basis of Weber's interpretation, the rule of expertise and bureaucracy mean the same, but according to Parsons – who describes that Weber confuses the dominance based on professional competence with a moral responsibility based on a legitimate office –, in the management of organisations, administrative and official positions are not necessarily filled by people with the strongest professional competence. For

<sup>148</sup> Séllei: *Professzornők*, 275.

<sup>149</sup> Bruckmüller, S. – Ryan, M. K. – Rink, F. – Haslam, S. A. (2014): *Beyond the Glass Ceiling: The Glass Cliff and Its Lessons for Organizational Policy*, <https://doi.org/10.1111/sipr.12006>

example, in a healthcare institution, the best doctors are left in the healing process while the administration is entrusted to serious officials.<sup>150</sup>

Thus, it is reasonable to assume that it is not necessarily the best professionals who are hired at the Academy of Sciences and for positions in higher educational institutions, but that mostly men (from the club) will be elected based on lobbying, the aforementioned habits, the Matthew effect, and the categorization based on other gender stereotypes.

This fact is further substantiated in the research done by Nóra Séllei, who studied women professors at the University of Debrecen, and found that there are no women among the leaders in certain fields at all. “The University of Debrecen has some ‘university’ faculties (this no longer being a legal category), which have as of yet not appointed a woman professor.”<sup>151</sup>

As management essentially requires male attributes, leadership attitudes are generally masculine. In addition, the paradoxical situation is described by the study *A token helyzet és a meritokrácia illúziója: a kivétel erősíti a szabályt?* [The token situation and the illusion of meritocracy: the exception reinforcing the rule?], “women who do get leadership positions will typically be in a token position in high status – ‘manly’ – areas, but this will not reduce prejudices against them; it will increase them due to intensified stereotyping.”<sup>152</sup>

For this reason, they start to behave like a “man”: that is, they try to adapt to their new roles by picking up masculine attributes. Thus, as a combined effect of the token situation and the chilling climate, assimilation can be interpreted as a phenomenon among the women leaders<sup>153</sup> which, in turn, leads to a displeasing result, since the traditionally masculine leadership style is seen as a negative value judgment for women and leads to a less favourable assessment. This is also a disadvantage for work organisations.

<sup>150</sup> Czakó, Á.: *Szervezetek és szerveződések a társadalomban. Szervezetszociológiai jegyzetek*, Budapest, BCE Szociológia és Társadalompolitika Intézet, 2011, 13.

<sup>151</sup> Séllei: Professzornők, 267. “These faculties include the Faculty of Law (ÁJK), Faculty of Informatics (IK), Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences and Environmental Management (MÉK) and Faculty of Economics and Business (GTK). This means there is not a single woman among the 36 professors working in the above faculties in 2015, and never was one among the 65 professors who were appointed to the faculties in their total lifespan. [There is one female professor on GTK, but she was originally appointed to the Faculty of Economics which has lost its individual status since]” (Séllei: Professzornők, 267).

<sup>152</sup> Vida–Kovács: *A token helyzet*, 145.

<sup>153</sup> Another way of fending off the stereotype is to try to assume the characteristics of a more positively regarded social group (Padilla, 2000, quoted by Block, C. J. – Koch, S. M. – Liberman, B. E. – Merriweather, T. J. – Roberson, L.: *Contending With Stereotype Threat at Work. A Model of Long-Term Responses* 197, *The Counseling Psychologist*, 39(4), 2011, 570–600, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000010382459>). “Assimilation refers to the process of trying to attain a more desired social identity by distancing oneself from members of one’s negatively stereotyped group and adopting the characteristics of members of a more highly regarded identity group” (Ellemers, Spears, Doosje, 2002; Roberts, 2005; Thomas, 1993, quoted by Block et al., 577).

In literature, a number of features based on binary oppositions were collected in connection with gender. Female qualities are considered being “affectionate, helpful, friendly, kind, and sympathetic, as well as interpersonally sensitive, gentle, and soft-spoken. In contrast, men are associated with being especially aggressive, ambitious, dominant, self-confident and forceful, as well as self-reliant and individualistic”. The latter traits “are also associated in most people’s minds with effective leadership. As a result, women leaders find themselves in a double bind”. If they have the characteristics of women, they are not good leaders and can be criticized because they are not strong enough. But if they are good managers, with masculine features, they seem to be disagreeable.<sup>154</sup>

“Representations of non-traditional ‘exceptions’ (feminists, careerist women) reflect negative attitudes (being seen as competent, but not lovable), making adaptation to the traditional role expectations ‘desirable’.”<sup>155</sup>

Identity is also part of the gender-conscious language use, as the research has shown that it is disagreeable when a woman is ‘too’ confident and manly in task-oriented situations because it violates the expectations towards women.<sup>156</sup> “The environment prefers more insecure women, who may even seek help in some things.”<sup>157</sup>

The hierarchy created by the evolving tendency of the job and preserved by the orderly closeness of the male world is present among scientists as well. The disadvantage of women researchers is mainly due to gender stereotypes and the division of male–female roles.<sup>158</sup> This was the result of the research carried out by two sociologists, Mária Schadt and Zsuzsanna Póttó between January 2007 and November 2009. Gender inequalities in research and development (R&D) were measured by examining different factors at the institutional (workplace, family) level, based on which the factors preventing the career prospects of women working in scientific research are reproduced. In their questionnaire study, a representative sample was taken that provided a

<sup>154</sup> Ryan et al.: Think crisis—think female, 471.

According to researchers’ supposition, in the field of scholarly work, most women have chosen to renounce competition as a solution to conflicts (Schadt, M.: *Esélyegyenlőtlenség a tudományos szférában*, in Nagy, I. – Pongrácz, T. (eds.): *Szerepváltozások. Jelentés a nők és férfiak helyzetéről 2011*, Budapest, TÁRKI – Nemzeti Erőforrás Minisztérium, 2011, 66).

With all this, it became apparent that “the positive changes in women’s education and higher education are usually only changes on the plane of consciousness, while inequalities persist among scientists” (ibidem).

<sup>155</sup> Kovács–Szabó: *Társadalmi nem és szexizmusok*, 44.

<sup>156</sup> Cf. Carli, L. L. – Eagly, A. H.: Gender effects on social influence and emergent leadership, in Powell, G. N. (ed.): *Handbook of gender and work*, Thousand Oaks, Ca, Sage Publications, 1999. 203–222, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452231365.n11>

<sup>157</sup> Nagy: *Szervezet és nemek*, 62.

<sup>158</sup> Schadt: *Esélyegyenlőtlenség a tudományos szférában*, 66.

comprehensive picture of work and career opportunities of men and women working in the scientific field. A total of 1271 questionnaires were analysed (the sample consisted of 447 men [34.2%] and 824 women [64.8%]) to seek answers to the differences between the two sexes in scientific advancement chances and circumstances in different disciplines.<sup>159</sup>

Their results have shown, among other things, that the requirements of scientific research could not be fulfilled by women as a result of reconciling private life tasks, namely family and career, because they have been much more burdened than men. However, women were in a disadvantaged position even if the same conditions existed for both, for instance, because men's anticipated confidence in their own sex meant additional benefits to men (see old men's club, Matthew effect). Fewer opportunities for women resulted in less professional achievement, fewer publications, and thus a lag in the hierarchy of scientific life.<sup>160</sup> Based on the answers to the open questions, it was also highlighted that out of men and women with the same qualifications and scientific degrees, men got better positions, most of them not for their performance.

## CONCLUSION

As can be seen therefore, the widespread conscious and unconscious mental innervations of women, men, and leaders are the factors behind discrimination. Numerous studies have confirmed that people associate women and men with different attributes, which favour the careers of men in the labour market. For this reason, the biggest obstacles in the careers of women are the result of traditional role perceptions.

If we look at the results, it is undeniable that there have been changes in all areas. On the scientific field, as Nóra Séllei writes in her study *Professzornők a Debreceni Egyetemen* [Women Professors at the University of Debrecen], the proportion of women with leading positions nearly doubled (17%) in four years, but "17% is still only one-third of 50%, and half of those with PhD degrees are women. Similarly, disproportionate data will be encountered even if we are not examining the leadership position but the hierarchy of university instructors."<sup>161</sup>

What can be done with such a multi-faceted issue?

<sup>159</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>160</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>161</sup> Séllei: *Professzornők*, 262.

Commonly recommended solutions include, for example, enforcing state anti-discrimination legislation in organisations. Let us not forget though that remedy is really impossible because it is difficult to detect or demonstrate gender inequality if it is a matter of normative injustice in the organisational structure and culture. According to Carli and Eagly, therefore, the most effective solution would be for individual organisations to recognize the problems themselves and to prevent or remedy them consciously, even locally.<sup>162</sup>

However, as Beáta Nagy puts it, the greatest problem everywhere, whether in the case of a state or organisational intervention, is that “those who have the means and power to change the status quo do not recognise the presence of stereotype and inequality because they do not even see them.”<sup>163</sup>

The aim of this chapter has been to raise awareness of the problem, its complexity and the need to keep these matters in mind, as there is a triple burden on graduate and leading women: the job, work at home and the struggle with the sexist working environment.<sup>164</sup>

<sup>162</sup> Eagly–Carli *Women and the Labyrinth*.

<sup>163</sup> Nagy: *Szervezet és nemek*, 63.

<sup>164</sup> Acker, quoted *ibidem*, 64.

## WHAT IS BEHIND THE ACADEMIC ELECTION?

Between Scylla and Charybdis: Female quotas or natural but slow change  
that might take decades?



*Come then goddess, answer me truthfully this:  
is there some way for me to escape away  
from deadly Charybdis,  
but yet fight the other one off,  
when she attacks my companions?*<sup>165</sup>

When the researcher's attention is brought to the membership of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA), it is first and foremost the unusually high degree of disproportion of the sexes that attracts one's attention. While in 2004 among the regular and correspondent members the percentage of men was 96%, in 2014 it is 93.2%. Therefore – as in other spheres – the ratio of women in leading positions in science and academia, compared to their educational performance is changing at a snail's pace,<sup>166</sup> even though today it is obvious that men are not any more competent in fulfilling these roles than women.<sup>167</sup> We can conclude that among the academics of the MTA the qualification of women has for a long time widely exceeded the requirements of becoming a member. This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive representation of the Hungarian aspects of academic membership for women, based on the contribution of valuable insight from researchers and academics while also listing the possible opportunities and tools that might be of help for raising the proportion of female academics in our country.

The indicators chiselled by facts and the graphs give us reason for alarm, not only when we take the model years, but even more if we take a look to the West. In Hungary the ratio of women in higher education represents over 50% of university degree holders and 35% of doctorates. It is an indisputable fact that if this is not only not reflected in Academy membership, but women's membership proportion does not rise to more than a meagre 7%, there are clearly some serious social and other reasons behind the phenomenon.

<sup>165</sup> Homer: *Odyssey*.

<sup>166</sup> Illésné Lukács et al., Grébins, quoted in Hadas: *Az MTA és a férfiuralom*, 1391.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibidem*.

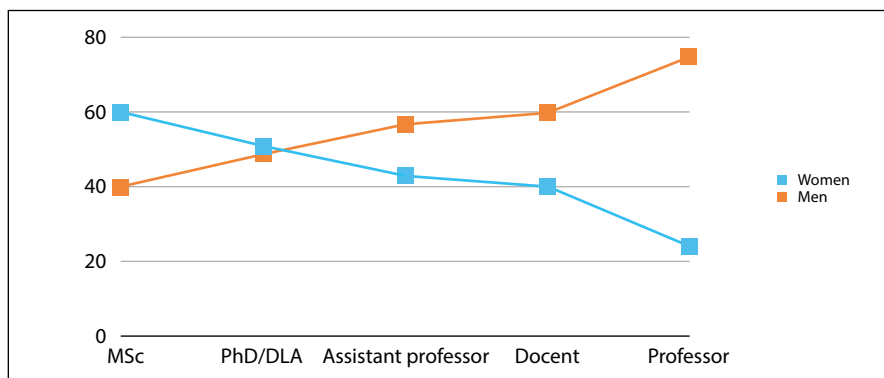


Chart 1. The rate of women and men at particular stages of the scientific course in Hungary (2014). Source: [http://mta.hu/mta\\_hirei/attorni-az-uevegplafont-kijutni-az-utvesztobol-elsokent-ult-ossze-a-nok-a-tudomanyban-kerekasztal-az-akademian-107103](http://mta.hu/mta_hirei/attorni-az-uevegplafont-kijutni-az-utvesztobol-elsokent-ult-ossze-a-nok-a-tudomanyban-kerekasztal-az-akademian-107103)

Female quotas for women in academia, or natural but slow change that might take decades? Because “[...] it would be hard to debate that to exclude 50% of a country’s brain capacity from the highest recognition, and the accompanying financial acknowledgement as well, would serve the disadvantage of the country’s science and its advancement.”<sup>168</sup>

Nóra Séllei in an exceptionally consequent manner proposed a question to consider in this topic, an aspect we need to be prioritise, for reasons she outlines: “...are we so wealthy that we can allow ourselves that the intellectual potential of women, making up more than a half of all the students in our current higher education system, can be left unutilized when it comes to their making steps towards an academic career?”<sup>169</sup> We may consider other European countries. The British Royal Society elected a membership 30% of which were women in 2015. The same figure was 26% in 2016. At the German National Academy of Sciences, the Leopoldina (Halle), which represents every scientific field, in 2014 and also in 2015, 33% of the elected candidates were women. They have a properly functioning and anti-discriminative system.<sup>170</sup> In the Academy of Sciences of the United States, out of the nine elected Stanford professors, no less than five were women.<sup>171</sup>

<sup>168</sup> Somogyi, P.: Alkalmasak-e a nők az Akadémiai tagságra?, *Magyar Tudomány* 2016/7, 2862. “By the way, the year 2007 was ‘the year of women’ at the Academy, when 7 women became correspondent members of MTA at once. That time the Chairman of MTA, Szilveszter E. Vizi aimed at raising the number of female academics, and he succeeded in it.” Lamm, V.: Nők az Akadémián, *Magyar Tudomány*, 177, 2016, 867, <http://www.matud.iif.hu/2016/07/14.htm> (accessed 12 May 2017).

<sup>169</sup> Séllei: Professzornők, 262.

<sup>170</sup> Somogyi: Alkalmasak-e a magyar nők, 862.

<sup>171</sup> Soltész, I.: Nők a Magyar Tudományos Akadémián, *Magyar Tudomány* 177, 2016, 1130.

If we were to make evaluations based on this data, the academic election of 2016 in Hungary where 26 men were elected and not a single woman, appears to be a somewhat tragic situation. With this turn of events, even the previous meagre 7% ratio of women decreased. Among others, this was one of the reasons for which, after the elections of 2016, several researchers set their pens to paper and articulated their opinions regarding the distressing events. Predominantly these articles stated the results as “unacceptable”, “impermissible” and “woeful”. The voices articulated on the pages of *Magyar Tudomány* [Hungarian Science] blamed mainly our academic election system for the situation. Péter Somogyi, a full member of the MTA shared his hypothesis that the Academy’s voting system is the main issue, and that the proportion of representation of the sexes did not improve not because Hungarian women would have been less qualified for academic roles than their western counterparts. “At the general meeting we voted in the twenty-six exceptional associate male scholars to be taken in as correspondents, besides external members as well as honorary members, as a contribution to their academic advancement. I am ashamed that no woman was admitted; this is unequivocally discrimination and it needs to be changed. This wailsome fact is that it is a reflection of our electoral system.”<sup>172</sup>

Most of the academics who made a stand in this matter believe that changing the obsolete voting system might be an adequate way to give women more access to the highest level of the academic hierarchy. The Western academies provide very clear models for it.

Because of the ossified traditions, habits and public opinion driving the logic behind the elections, however, it seems that more radical modifications are needed. The unreasonable neglect of qualified and available female post-doctoral researchers will remain just as it is for decades if we just keep waiting to see female academic participation becoming natural instead of taking them into scientific circulation with the help of regulations from above, for example, with a quota system based on equal accomplishments. Because “women often say that they made it to the academical field ‘almost accidentally’, they were lacking the confidence to believe that they could befit such a place”.<sup>173</sup> The main reason for this is that the identities of female scholars and their scientific self-articulation became problematic because of their lack of a solid rooting in the academic ground, their lack of reassuring models and their fragmentation. The vocational self-defining process in this scientific environment, which has been unknown to women because of the strong walls of male dominance within the Academy so far, means extra challenges for them in addition to their achievements. From this perspective, the quota would be an affirmative model

<sup>172</sup> Somogyi: Alkalmasak-e a magyar nők, 862–864.

<sup>173</sup> Caplan, P. J., quoted by Papp, E. (2007): *A nők és férfiak közti esélyegyenlőség a kutatásfejlesztésben Magyarországon nemzetközi összehasonlításban*, <https://adoc.pub/doktori-ertekezes-papp-eszter.html> (accessed 1 May 2017), 32.

and would ease the unnecessary difficulties, but in no way would it affect the accomplishments and merits required for entry.

“To summarize: we cannot evade the immediate action the Academy needs to take in order to grow the numbers of its female members in the short-term” – writes Péter Csermely, correspondent member of the Academy.<sup>174</sup>

INFORMATORY FRAGMENTS TO GIVE GUIDANCE WITH SOME MISTAKEN  
PRECONCEPTIONS<sup>175</sup>

– ABOUT THE ELECTION SYSTEM OF THE HUNGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

*Oh, would an age might once dawn that should melt  
This cold indifferent world, and with new strength  
Confront the outworn lumber of the past...<sup>176</sup>*

Before I unpack further my commentaries on the quota system, I believe it is important to take a closer look at the extant election system of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences – a system that has been referred to as outdated, even incorrect by some members of the Academy – and I will also outline how the Academy works.

During its long existence, the Academy has become the most important institution of the Hungarian Sciences. István Széchenyi’s well-known statement in the Hungarian Parliament on the 3rd of November 1825 – “[...] and if an institution shall come forth to unfold the Hungarian language, helping our fellow countrymen in their Hungarian education, I am willing to expend the proceeds of one year of my earnings on that” – began the Academy’s own journey, named the Scientist Society at that time, which eventually held its first directory meeting in Pozsony (Bratislava) in November 1830.

In February 1831 it was followed by the first general meeting of the organization, based on whose measures the Scientist Society started to function to enrich and nurture Hungarian culture, science and language. There were 6 classes in it – 42 full members and 24 complimentary members. The Hungarian Scientist Society changed its name to Academy in 1840 and – luckily – it started its undiminished advancement in spite of the storms of the Hungarian history of the 19th century.<sup>177</sup>

<sup>174</sup> Csermely, P.: A nők tudományos előmenetele mint felülről korlátozódó hálózatos jelenség, *Magyar Tudomány*, 624, 2017, <http://www.matud.iif.hu/2017/05/16.htm> (accessed 5 May 2017).

<sup>175</sup> Based on the full title of István Széchenyi’s book *Világ* [World].

<sup>176</sup> Madách, I.: *Az ember tragédiája* [The tragedy of Man], Budapest, Móra, 1977, 104.

<sup>177</sup> Tarján, M. T.: *1825. november 3. Széchenyi István felajánlja egy évi jövedelmét a Tudós Társaság számára* [3rd of November 1825. István Széchenyi offers his earnings of one year to the Scientist Society], <https://rubicon.hu/kalendarium/1825-november-3-szechenyi-istvan-felajanjla-egy-evi-jovedelmet-a-tudos-tarsasag-szamara> (accessed 19 July 2022).

After looking at this history in retrospect, we can see that almost two hundred years after its founding, the internal process of the member selection shows that there have hardly been any changes in the gender proportions (today the female ratio is prox. 10% among academics), so we can take cognizance of its uninterrupted operation indeed.<sup>178</sup> The elections are held based on peremptory laws, which are de jure democratic, but are de facto reflections of conserved habits. They do not allow the enforcement of new approaches of shifting demands. „*Non omnium, quae a maioribus constituta sunt, ratio reddi potest*”<sup>179</sup> – writes the Latin. Today this way of thinking is still considered valid, leads public opinion, and considers certain rules unalterable. Accordingly, it is not necessary to seek any order or system in the cast of the thought of the earlier generations and in the categories they have made, we should simply accept them, good as they are. We tend to forget that every rule based on an old habit was likely made out of an instantaneous necessity, so it was serving a certain need that surfaced at that given moment in time. But as of today these have become outdated and in the new eco-social context do not hold up anymore. “It is well-known that in the course of electing new members in a male-dominated organisation males are naturally chosen again.”<sup>180</sup> Since the same method of election has been in place for a longer period, and since men have been a majority for all this period, it is easy to think that its operation is only possible as it is, and that this is all well and natural.

To the question of femininity of whether a female would be called to master and represent higher sciences and arts, as it is stated strongly by the knights of female emancipation, we say no without any hesitation before God and man after learning the times and observing the outstanding facts.<sup>181</sup>

Technology and science has been the territory of men since the XIX. century, because there is an existing preconception about women being naturally unfit for a scientific career, as they are not capable of rational thinking, understanding abstract ideas and unable to use this knowledge for technical purposes.<sup>182</sup>

This assessment was conserved by facts like those that Claudia Wagner and her colleagues studied in their work titled *Women through the glass ceiling*:

<sup>178</sup> Today there are 11 functioning classes, eight out of these are of natural sciences, three are of social sciences.

<sup>179</sup> Iulianus 55 Dig., Dig. 1.3.20

<sup>180</sup> Hargittai, M.: Korlátozott pozitív diszkrimináció, *Magyar Tudomány* 177, 2016, <http://www.matud.iif.hu/2016/07/12.htm> (accessed 1 May 2017).

<sup>181</sup> Herczeghy, M.: *A nő fizikai és szellemi természete – Különös tekintettel a keresztény vallásra, az erkölcsiségre és a tudományra*, Budapest, Grill Károly Királyi udvari könyvkereskedése, 1883, 121.

<sup>182</sup> Mosconi; quoted by: Papp: *A nők és férfiak közti esélyegyenlőség*.

*gender asymmetries in Wikipedia*. In the research quoted by the academic Péter Csermely among others, it was proven that “in the Wikipedia articles of women, the negative parts of their biographies are described with more specific phrases than the positive parts. In the biographies of men, it is the other way around.”<sup>183</sup> Our assessment of reality is strongly affected by the media and the narratives by which they share information take the place of the whole truth. Along the arguments of the analysis comparing female and male biographies, it becomes apparent that in the case of women, a biography is more likely to include themes in connection with family, relationships and sexuality, as well as putting any mistakes and failings they made on display more than in the case of men. This is one of the causes, as mentioned earlier, of the so-called glass-ceiling effect as understood by the cited authors.<sup>184</sup>

This labelling regarding women puts the female scientist figure in the unsolicited position of a priori provisionality. While the man imbues himself with self-sufficient essentiality, the female subject-construct achieves this by resembling others and comes to be seen as such in the view of males. Because of this, as in other fields, the fading career of female scientists eventually ends in their disappearing in uneventfulness. Unfortunately the set frames of this present chapter do not leave sufficient room to unfold in detail the philosophical and social traditions behind the phenomenon, but mentioning them at least in passing is indispensable among reviewing the facts and data. But of course, we will discuss this issue further in context of the semi-structured interviews.

The member election of 2016 took place by the rules of procedure that were approved by the 183th general assembly of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The 6th paragraph of the approved document, “Rules of electing academics” contains the fundamental principles of electing academics, its order of procedures and the formal and compendary requirements of the process of giving recommendations, as well as the rules of nominating.<sup>185</sup>

The first paragraph is about the number of the members, giving an exhaustive list regarding the frame numbers of the full members, the fellow members and the honorary members.

The Principles 1. § states: (1) In the XL-th law of 1994 about the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, paragraph 6 states that the academic members are made up of full and correspondent members (henceforth “regular members” as a summary), and external and honorary members. (2) Academics are elected by

<sup>183</sup> Csermely: A nők tudományos előmenetele, 624.

<sup>184</sup> Wagner, C. – Graells-Garrido, E. – Garcia, D. – Menczer, F. (2016): *Women through the glass ceiling: gender asymmetries in Wikipedia*, <https://epjdatascience.springeropen.com/articles/10.1140/epjds/s13688-016-0066-4> (accessed 30 May 2017).

<sup>185</sup> [http://mta.hu/data/dokumentumok/hatteranyagok/akademikusvalasztas/2016\\_evi\\_akademikusvalasztas\\_elj\\_szab.pdf](http://mta.hu/data/dokumentumok/hatteranyagok/akademikusvalasztas/2016_evi_akademikusvalasztas_elj_szab.pdf) (accessed 30 May 2017).

the regular members to become members of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (henceforth Academy). (3) The number of the members under the age of 70 cannot exceed 200, and the total number of regular members cannot exceed 365. (4) During the election of external members it should be taken into consideration that the total number of external members under the age of 70 should stay below 70 persons. (5) The overall number of the electable candidates to become honorary members at the Academy's election meeting should not exceed 11 persons.<sup>186</sup>

At the Academy's 186th General Meeting, by the guiding principles established by the Assembly of Academics, the most important aspects of the election of new members are the academic achievement and the traditional academical values like international recognition, school establishing activities, and long-term outstanding professional efficiency.<sup>187</sup> These principles specially define the detailed requirements of achieving different classes and exhaustively list the conditions of earning the titles of full, correspondent, external and honorary membership. Based on these, full membership can be given to a Hungarian citizen who has already been given the correspondent member title and who has achieved significant scientific results after receiving the correspondent status. An external member can be the scientist who habitually lives outside of the borders of Hungary, who is not or not only a Hungarian citizen but identifies himself or herself as Hungarian and masters his or her science at high standards in a constitutive and acknowledged way while also maintains a close relationship with the Hungarian scientific scene. Honorary member can be a foreigner (not Hungarian citizen or dual citizen, as well as Hungarian citizen living in a foreign country) scientist who is practicing his or her expertise in an internationally significant way at high standards so he or she can rightfully expect the special appreciation of the Hungarian academics.<sup>188</sup>

The first step in the process of becoming a member of the Academy is a letter of recommendation. In fact "[...] a recommendation of written form of the members of the Academy is needed, and must be handed in before the deadline set by the members of the chairmanship, to the assigned scientific department."<sup>189</sup>

<sup>186</sup> [http://mta.hu/data/dokumentumok/hatteranyagok/akademikusvalasztas/2016\\_evi\\_akademikusvalasztas\\_elj\\_szab.pdf](http://mta.hu/data/dokumentumok/hatteranyagok/akademikusvalasztas/2016_evi_akademikusvalasztas_elj_szab.pdf) (accessed 30 May 2017).

<sup>187</sup> [http://mta.hu/mta\\_hirei/akademikusvalasztas-nyilvanosak-az-akademiai-tagajanlasok-105782](http://mta.hu/mta_hirei/akademikusvalasztas-nyilvanosak-az-akademiai-tagajanlasok-105782) (accessed 30 May 2017).

<sup>188</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>189</sup> [http://mta.hu/data/dokumentumok/hatteranyagok/akademikusvalasztas/2016\\_evi\\_akademikusvalasztas\\_elj\\_szab.pdf](http://mta.hu/data/dokumentumok/hatteranyagok/akademikusvalasztas/2016_evi_akademikusvalasztas_elj_szab.pdf) (accessed 30 May 2017).

### Formal requirements of the recommendation

“4. § (1) Member candidates (full, correspondent, external and honorary member candidates) can be those who have at least three recommendations according to the detailed rules of the 4. §. (3) paragraph.”<sup>190</sup>

The problem is not to be found in the rules, but in the method of the election process and the traditions guiding it. Namely, the academic classes have a member assigning meeting and only those candidates can get on the joint academic list of candidates who have received more than half of the votes in the classes.<sup>191</sup> “It all depends on the success of the lobbying groups as it always was and always will be this way – these are simply the characteristics wired in human minds and especially males’. As we have to live with it, what should we do to create a system that can one day hopefully give an equal chance to women?”<sup>192</sup>

Another approach emphasizes another root of this problem that lies even deeper, as currently there is no existing alignment of female candidates (post-doctorates) to even choose from for the nomination of the academic membership. “There are very few women at the MTA and among the doctorates of science as well. The holders of these degrees, out of 2689 researchers there are 418 females (15.5%). Even though statistics prove that at the time of receiving the PhD, the ratio of the genders are close to equal.”<sup>193</sup> The reason for this is the fact that

we carry with ourselves the historical heritage of the prejudices from the previous system of the educational and academic progress. Most of our academic women are members of an age group where in certain disciplines at the time of achieving the university degree and then the academical degrees, the ratio of women was very low for a long time, so the amount of the nominable women was low as well. Therefore, it became commonplace that there was a small group to nominate and so only a few were nominated. This might be why it is such an unexpected event for women to receive the nomination, and being elected is experienced as some sort of miracle and despite their outstanding achievements, rejection is usually taken with silent resignation and recession. [...] The practise and the result of the election of 2016

<sup>190</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>191</sup> Altogether only one woman received more than 50% of the votes of the Biology Department, following a campaign run by some members of the department in a manner unworthy of our Academy. Because of the amount of negative votes, she did not make it to the top three candidates despite receiving the same amount of positive votes as the male scientist who got in at the second place. (Somogyi, P.: Alkalmasak-e a magyar nők)

<sup>192</sup> Somogyi: Alkalmasak-e a magyar nők, 862.

<sup>193</sup> [http://mta.hu/mta\\_hirei/megalakult-a-nok-a-kutato-i-eletpalyan-elnoki-bizottsag-107348](http://mta.hu/mta_hirei/megalakult-a-nok-a-kutato-i-eletpalyan-elnoki-bizottsag-107348) (accessed 30 May 2017).

also proved that discrimination between sexes is very prominent in the common conception, and the recognition and acknowledgement of women's academic quality can even be distorted because of that.<sup>194</sup>

We can assume that the critical evaluation of the election and the reasoning behind the initiative that aims to change it disturb the natural democratic progress as a result of the unchangeable mistakes of previous eras, that this way cannot respond to the challenges of modern ages and prohibits successful economic and social cohesion.

In the view of certain members, an element that needs to be changed during the voting process of some classes is for example the mechanism of using a confidential NO without explanation, replaced with only a YES or the option to leave a blank answer. Explanation: the NO vote without an explanation is one of the remaining traditions from the communist era, and it has no place in the 21st century.<sup>195</sup>

The success of the change and the transformation of the academic election system depends on – as I have mentioned above – the fundamental change of attitude, which is always a slow and time-consuming process. “[...] If we manage to shift the searching, nominating and electing practices to a better direction, we can generate a significant change in the approaches that evolved during recent decades. The former one is easier, the latter, because of its nature of being bound to inurement, is significantly harder.”<sup>196</sup>

We should not dismiss the exceptions in the Principles of the election of members in 2016. At first sight it might look like a huge achievement, as it says “Academical classes – in cases of candidates with equal achievements – (a.) should be aware of the (i.): ratio of men and women;”<sup>197</sup> Even though in the light of these facts it might seem like only a formal statement and remains in the shadows of the evolved habits and practices, it still appears democratic.

In other words, only changing some rules or applying new ones cannot work because in addition “it requires the change of the whole Hungarian society and the public opinion which would be a long process. Furthermore, if these complex changes magically happened in a day, the results in the membership of female researchers and scientists would become apparent only two-three-four decades later. We cannot wait that long.”<sup>198</sup>

<sup>194</sup> Csépe, V.: Túl az üvegplafonon, *Magyar Tudomány* 178, 2017, 359.

<sup>195</sup> Somogyi: Alkalmasak-e a magyar nők, 862.

<sup>196</sup> Csépe: Túl az üvegplafonon, 359.

<sup>197</sup> [http://mta.hu/data/dokumentumok/hatteranyagok/akademikusvalasztas/2016evi\\_akademikusvalasztas\\_iranyelvek.pdf](http://mta.hu/data/dokumentumok/hatteranyagok/akademikusvalasztas/2016evi_akademikusvalasztas_iranyelvek.pdf) (accessed 30 May 2017).

<sup>198</sup> Csermely: A nők tudományos előmenetele, 624.

In light of this, I personally think that such transformation of the election system without a stronger regulation on the female quota would not be a sufficient condition to change the current absurd situation. Today out of the 760 full, correspondent, external and honorary members of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, only 36 are women (which means 4.73%). Among the 364 regular members of the Academy only 20 full and 4 correspondent members are women (6.59%).<sup>199</sup>

### **Female quota versus slow change<sup>200</sup> – *quota pro and contra***

As we have mentioned previously, to facilitate the Academy's function in a more democratic way, introducing the female quota could mean a possible solution. Miklós Hadas, a doctor of MTA brought up the idea of introducing the quota that applies in case of equal accomplishments, or a form of it that could – in his opinion – be a crucial instrument in creating an Academy that is free of discrimination.

[...] in the case of equal accomplishments – I think it would be worth considering even applying positive discrimination with women. More than that, I am supporting the gradual implementation of a quota system, and by that I mean considering the different institutional levels and the time factors as well. On the level of academics it is apparent that applying the mandatory and immediate gender quotas would be impossible. At the same time, beginning to apply the one third gender quota would be a way to start on the level of corporate members and that of various academic committees so much more, as this – fortunately – has already been prevailing in some panels in the present.<sup>201</sup>

Magdolna Hargittai, author of *Nők a tudományban határok nélkül* [Women in science without borders] suggested the same solution.<sup>202</sup>

<sup>199</sup> Somogyi: *Alkalmasak-e a magyar nők*, 862.

<sup>200</sup> "This has been like this so far; the 0.17% yearly growth in the ratio of women members during the past 25 years cannot be considered fast [...] By the current mechanisms, if we could keep the pace of electing women of the past 25 years (for which we have no proof), the ratio of women at the Academy would reach 30% only in 2150. But even the proportion of 30% would not reflect the measure with which women assisted to the progress of sciences." Somogyi, P.: A számok beszélnek [Numbers talk], *Magyar Tudomány* [Hungarian Science] 178, 2017/5, 627–630.

<sup>201</sup> Hadas: *Az MTA és a férfifuralom*, 1393.

<sup>202</sup> Hargittai: *Korlátozott pozitív diszkrimináció*.

I believe that among limited frames positive discrimination would be needed and possible. In cases where the classes have to decide between a female and a male candidate with roughly similar accomplishments, the Academy should recommend to support the female candidate as well as to consider the number of female candidates when determining the frame numbers of the classes. With this approach, the autonomy of the classes is left unharmed during electing their candidates, and the principle remains as well that the chairmanship cannot change the sequence of the voting of the classes.<sup>203</sup>

While some of them (including some doctors and members of the MTA) agree with the statements above and would support the installment of the quota to liberate the discrimination-burdened academical election system, it would still be insulting – even to women – that the system is not “based on merits, but on a positively discriminative solution”.<sup>204</sup> For example, Valéria Csépe, a correspondent member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences says that

it is hard to agree with applying positive discrimination as the solution for this issue. Positive discrimination is discrimination even if it is positive and it serves the desired outcome for a certain group. Positive discrimination is not a relevant criterion from the angle of achievements, it gives advantages to women and gives disadvantages to the men with similar or equal achievements.<sup>205</sup>

Thus many women make the case for risking the scientific achievements if any kind of quota were to be introduced, and so they are dismissive towards this. “I don’t know any academic women who would want the quota system, as we believe that as members of the Academy, we are not representing women but ourselves. This might be one of the reasons why academic women are reluctant to speak on this topic, as they fear to risk the judgement of scientific merits.”<sup>206</sup> “[...] We would put those colleagues in an excessively unpleasant situation who were accepted to the Academy on the basis of consolation.”<sup>207</sup> Also Vanda Lamm (who was elected to be head of department for the next three years by

<sup>203</sup> Ibidem, 865.

<sup>204</sup> Let there be more female academics, let their proportion grow among post doctorates and among the doctorates of the Academy – these are the highest aims of the newly formed committee led by the academic Vanda Lamm. See more of the uniform viewpoint of the Nők a Kutatói Életpályán Elnöki Bizottság [Chairmanship of Females in Research Career] on this subject: [http://mta.hu/mta\\_hirei/megalakult-a-nok-a-kutato-i-eletpalyan-elnoki-bizottsag-107348](http://mta.hu/mta_hirei/megalakult-a-nok-a-kutato-i-eletpalyan-elnoki-bizottsag-107348) (accessed 21 May 2022).

<sup>205</sup> Csépe: Túl az üvegplafonon, 359.

<sup>206</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>207</sup> Kamarás, K.: Nők az Akadémián, *Magyar Tudomány* 177, 2016, 866, <http://www.matud.iif.hu/2016/07/13.htm> (accessed 5 May 2017).

the Department of Economical and Legal Sciences of the MTA at their closed general meeting in May),<sup>208</sup> a full member of the MTA suggests that a quota is not the right solution, and she is against the use of any instruments that would consider anything else apart from regular scientific achievements. Instead, she propounds that “[...]growing the numbers of female academics would be speeded up primarily by having more women receiving the title of Doctor of MTA since the academics of the future will come out of them. Sadly, it is a widespread practice that one can become a university teacher without achieving the titles of DSc / Doctor of MTA (that applies to men as well), and it goes against striving to earn the academic title.”<sup>209</sup>

Despite the facts above, it seems as if the female quota based on equal achievements would still be a good and necessary solution, even if as positive discrimination, it is being severely criticized. It would only on the surface result in unfair advantages for the women. In reality, it would only help those women who already have the adequate scientific achievements to get into the Academy, the ones who have similar merits to their male counterparts, which qualify them as fit for such a position.

This way we could ensure a model and lay the foundations to a scientific tradition and experience for the next generation of women. That is, it would fill the role of a catalyst in the courses of equal opportunity and democratization in Hungary. *Nota bene*, the quota in itself would not be enough even if it could get rid of the weight of all revulsion against it, because in order to be able to operate well, it should be supported with measures that can help with combining family and work,<sup>210</sup> so that Hungarian women shouldn't have to make the choice between these. Only this way is it possible that women could partake of the academic life and research with the comprehensive utilization of their knowledge. “Reintegration after childbirth, forming and maintaining groups independently, engagement in leading roles with the support of corporate executives (+ a women- and family-friendly workplace + positive models of successful leading researcher careers of women) are all crucial elements of taking the research

<sup>208</sup> After one quarter of a century, once again a lawyer became the chairperson of the Department of Economics and Law. She is Vanda Lamm. By her election, a female academic has become the chairperson of a scientific department after a long time again. Besides her, six new chairpersons were elected during the renewal of officers – Attila Zsoldos, Miklós Laczkovich, László Péter Kollár, Ferenc Fülöp, László Bozó and Zoltán Rác. Source: mta.hu: [http://mta.hu/mta\\_hirei/noi-elnok-is-van-a-tudomanys-osztalyok-uj-vezetoi-kozott-az-akademian-107834](http://mta.hu/mta_hirei/noi-elnok-is-van-a-tudomanys-osztalyok-uj-vezetoi-kozott-az-akademian-107834) (accessed 21 May 2022).

<sup>209</sup> Lamm: *Nők az Akadémián*, 867.

<sup>210</sup> “In the case of women with children choosing a career on the labour market, it can be problematic to uninterruptedly attend to their roles in the family. In their case the effective integration into society depends on solving the childcare issue in either a private or institutional setting.” Koncz, K. (2016b): A mainstream nőpolitika zsákutca?!, *Magyar Tudomány*, 2016/4, 470.

work of women to its rightful place, without which some separate measures will not work magic in themselves.”<sup>211</sup>

IN SUMMA

*Here he ponders things that were not [...] what might have been: possibilities of the possible as possible: things not known: what name Achilles bore when he lived among women.*<sup>212</sup>

Scylla and Charybdis, the horrors chosen in the title of this essay are phenomena of the 12th book of Homer’s *Odyssey*. These immense dangers stood before Odysseus when he reached a sea gate and had to enter it following his long and exhausting travels. On one part of the strait the beast Scylla, on the other one the whirlpool Charybdis threatened him. If he wanted to avoid one of them, he had to navigate closer to the other. In the tale, even though he managed to escape Charybdis (which was the more dangerous) Scylla still took six of his people. The phrase reduced from this tale implies the difficult choice in the case of two bad options, which cannot be avoided. We are trying to choose the lesser evil to achieve the higher good.

But what might be the stand on this choice and problem of those who have not made it to the Academy yet? What are the obligations of those who have already made it? And how will those decide who have the chance to choose?

On the one side, we have the phantom of the female quota as positive discrimination. On the other side, there is a long and tiresome journey that would mean the slow and time-consuming process of changing the public opinion, during which many female researchers’ careers might suffer and sink. As Katalin Kamarás, a full member of the MTA wrote in her opinion-shaping article *Nők az Akadémián* [Women at the Academy], to elect female researchers eligible for nomination can be solved only in the distance of long years by encouraging the younger generations.<sup>213</sup>

Anyway, in either case there will be severe damage done to the female academic sphere, because

the careers of many highly talented female researchers get stuck, and we will never find out what they might have been capable of. Others, who have extreme bearing capacity, who are enduring and maybe even fortunate in a sense that their surroundings, especially their partner is supportive, accepting and helpful towards

<sup>211</sup> Csermely: A nők tudományos előmenetele, 624.

<sup>212</sup> Joyce, J.: *Ulysses*, <https://web.itu.edu.tr/inceogl4/modernism/Ulysses.pdf> (accessed 21 May 2022), 347.

<sup>213</sup> Kamarás: *Nők az Akadémián*, 866.

them, can fulfill their purposes, although their career often slows down. They earn their academic degree later, and it might never unravel that they could have been just as competent as their male counterparts.<sup>214</sup>

Generally, it can be seen only afterwards whether the methods chosen to promote decisions and changes were good. As Hegel wrote, *the owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the coming of the dusk*,<sup>215</sup> meaning that in cases of practical matters, wisdom is posterior, because the theories reflecting current situations or problems are usually not capable of solving or refining the processes in the midst of what they come into existence. Anyhow, it is certainly sure that in order to achieve the requiem of male dominance at the Academy, the old voices of a *single disk of a barrel organ*, the cliché of the inadequacy of females in scientific careers, should be quickly forgotten.

<sup>214</sup> Csépe: Túl az üvegplafonon, 359.

<sup>215</sup> The well known maxim, in English: Browning, G. K.: Hegel's Plato: The Owl of Minerva, Political Philosophy and History, in *Hegel and the History of Political Philosophy*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 1999, 34, [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230596139\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230596139_3)

## WOMEN IN THE SCIENTIFIC ELITE

Interrelation of gender identity and sexist beliefs in their careers



### THE SOCIAL ISSUE, OBJECTIVE OF RESEARCH

The cause of the significantly lower proportional presence of women in academies and leadership positions, historically and into the present day, can mostly be interpreted within the scope of the gender order<sup>216</sup> dominating the society, legitimised by the different gender stereotypes. As a result of this, women are currently still disadvantaged with regards to the redistribution of positions.

Thus, answers are needed not only to the questions as to what barriers female scholars need to overcome during their career, whether they are able to break through the glass ceiling, what kind of compromises they need to reach (family versus career), or even what the difficulties are of entering the male-dominated terrain. We also need to address the questions of how gender stereotypes appear in the self-identification of women explicitly and implicitly, and how the essentializing discourse appears in their own lives as well. Earlier papers have established the fact that it is not only men who are the ones supporting “sexist myths”, but that women often do so as well (ways of self-discrimination,<sup>217</sup> self-stereotyping and internalisation). This can be viewed as an indirect barrier in situations where women attempt to succeed in areas that can be characterized as male-overrepresented.<sup>218</sup> This means that hostile sexism, as

<sup>216</sup> Nagy: *Ki áll a sikeres nő mögött?*, 461.

<sup>217</sup> A more detailed explanation can be found in Anker et al.: “The glass ceiling metaphor is not only an indication of the presence of an external, objective obstacle, but it also indicates that women themselves are refusing to choose certain professions and jobs, although they would be able to – they can therefore be considered victims of ‘self-discrimination’” (Anker et al. quoted by Nagy–Primecz: *Nők és férfiak a szervezetekben*, 8).

<sup>218</sup> This and similar phenomena are framed as the so-called “Goldberg paradigm” in the literature. Philip Goldberg’s experiment is from 1968. As mentioned before, he asked two groups of students to evaluate the same essays. The only difference was that the essays were first alleged to be authored by men, then by women. The results show the deeply rooted prejudices mentioned above have affected the objectivity of the students’ evaluation of the papers. The texts attributed to a woman author received worse results than the same texts when did when attributed to a male author (except for those handling traditionally female topics). Certain analysts found it important to state that the research results show that it is not only men who have gender prejudices. In fact, both men and women rate men more favourably than women, even in the case of their performance being identical. (Lincoln et al.: *The Matilda*, 308)

well as benevolent and modern sexism,<sup>219</sup> is present among women as well as men, albeit with differing emphases. While a part of the female populace more or less agrees with these stereotypes, another part of the female populace completely rejects every expression of these, and aims to collectively to change them.<sup>220</sup>

How does all this appear in the Hungarian scientific elite? What is the stance of female academicians to the question of women? Can the aforementioned “self-discrimination” or “stereotype threat”<sup>221</sup> be detected among them? How are gender stereotypes, “sexist beliefs”, present among the surveyed female scholars? What are the different social gender identity types that can be isolated in light of those? Does the essentializing discourse present itself at all among the surveyed scholars,<sup>222</sup> and in what forms does it manifest itself? How strong is the phenomenon of identifying with women among those with a DSc degree, what is their relationship towards their own collective? What does it mean for them to be a woman from the perspective of female characteristics, traits, interests and values?

#### APPLIED METHOD AND SAMPLE, FURTHER RESEARCH ISSUES

As I have mentioned in the *Introduction* to this book, I have attempted to find answers to the queries I have raised by using the form of semi-structured interviews with female members of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences [Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, referred to henceforth as MTA]. These were recorded between December 2017 and September 2018. A total of 32 women were interviewed: 11 academicians (ordinary or corresponding members) and 21 DScs.<sup>223</sup> The complete membership of MTA consisted of 344 ordinary and corresponding members in that time period, a mere 24 of whom were women,

<sup>219</sup> The concept of sexism itself is an umbrella term for gender attitudes, which are not necessarily only negative. There is what we can call benevolent sexism, which, while carrying positive sentiments, nonetheless reinforces the traditional stereotypes. Glick and Fiske describe sexism as a multi-dimensional construct that covers two sexist attitudes: hostile and benevolent sexism. Hostile sexism is defined as the aspects of sexism which are based on the classic concept of prejudice as described by Allport (Glick, P – Fiske, S. T.: *The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory: Differentiating Hostile and Benevolent Sexism*, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 70(3), 1996, 491).

<sup>220</sup> Becker, J. C. – Wagner, U.: *Doing Gender Differently. The Interplay of Strength of Gender Identification and Content of Gender Identity in Predicting Women’s Endorsement of Sexist Beliefs*, *European Journal of Social Psychology* 39(4), 2009, 487.

<sup>221</sup> The term stereotype threat was first defined by Steele and Aronson (Steele–Aronson: *Stereotype threat*).

<sup>222</sup> As mentioned while detailing the research sample, interviews were made with female academicians as well as female DScs of the MTA (Magyar Tudományos Akadémia).

<sup>223</sup> The analysis was part of a larger research, merely one aspect of which was the examination of female identity.

equalling a proportion of 6.7%. (The 2019 member election raised this percentage to 8.7%,<sup>224</sup> with the last election in 2022 raising it further to 10.4%.) There were only 418 women among the 2689 Doctors of Science in the MTA, which equals a proportion of 15.5%. Most of the female researchers interviewed were between 65 and 80 years of age. Only 4 of the interviewees were under 60, and only one of them had not reached the age of 50.<sup>225</sup>

I chose the set of academicians and MTA DScs in particular because this is one of the fields that are exceptionally male-dominated to this day (93.3% males in the academy, 85.5% among the DScs). Since only a minor fraction of women (6.7%, 15.5% respectively) reach the highest echelons of scientific life, it is reasonable to investigate how the attitude towards the female question presents itself in these strata, and to inquire into the universal attitude toward the low percentage of women in the MTA. Significantly, it seems that regardless of the fact that there are more and more women entering the scientific field and receiving a PhD degree in high proportion (45% of PhDs), their number in the Academy and among the DScs hardly changes at all.

An important aspect when selecting the research sample was for the interviewees to represent all scientific fields, which can potentially demonstrate whether there is any significant difference (with regards to the questions listed above) between women active in the technical or natural sciences on the one hand (engineering, mathematics or physics in particular) – which are traditionally viewed as being “masculine” – and the representatives of social and human sciences on the other hand. A total of 17 scholars from the fields of social and human sciences, and a further 15 from those of the technical or natural sciences took part in the research. My assumption was that we can also find out whether a female mathematician or physicist can indeed suffer difficulties, “getting cozy” in those areas, and if only very determined women can tolerate the male environment, as Magdolna Hargittai argues in her book.<sup>226</sup> This latter phenomenon is most often described as a “chilling climate” in other works, meaning that the male majority in a certain workplace organisation can create an “alien”, cold ambience for new female arrivals.<sup>227</sup> The result of this is that the only possible route of personal mobility for these women is through assimilation, i.e. the adoption of perceived male characteristics.

<sup>224</sup> Cf. Lamm, V. – Nagy, B.: 2019 ismét a „nők éve” az Akadémián. Törekvések a nők tudományos pályafutásának támogatására, *Magyar Tudomány* 180(11), 2019, 1653.

<sup>225</sup> The interviewees were approached with official requests (e-mail) for the interviews, which detailed the specifics of the research. A suitable date was arranged in the same correspondence or a follow-up telephone conversation after that. The interviews took 1–1.5 hours each, and were recorded with a portable voice recorder. A word-for-word transcript has been made for the sake of quotability, thereby assisting a thorough analysis.

<sup>226</sup> Hargittai, M.: *Nők a tudományban – határok nélkül*, Budapest, Akadémiai, 2015, 359.

<sup>227</sup> Nagy: *Szervezet és nemek*, 61.

The term *token* is most often used by feminist theoreticians to describe this phenomenon, with *token* usually signifying the small minority of women in the highest echelons in the context of “masculine” professions, representing an exception, who are in the “man’s world” not characteristically tailored to their gender. Thereby they do not enter it as a reinforcement of a collective character trait, but they enter it as if from the outside, from a frontier and then assimilate to the standards of the “man’s world”.

Therefore, in the areas where women are significantly underrepresented, there are always two choices: (1) coping with the “chilling climate”, for they would otherwise drop away,<sup>228</sup> with the hostile environment rejecting them, or (2) assimilation, becoming masculine, meaning surrendering certain aspects of their gender identity.<sup>229</sup> Women with a role in “masculine” professions are not changing the status quo; paradoxically they are reinforcing it.

These assimilation processes can manifest in different ways; they can be the appropriation of physical, cultural and social role characteristics.<sup>230</sup> “According to Irigaray, if a woman intends to speak as a theorist, she will speak as a man, i.e. she will imitate male speaking patterns. Her femininity can simply not appear in the dominant philosophical discourse.”<sup>231</sup>

<sup>228</sup> For further details see the research paper *Lányok útja a műszaki diplomáig* [Girls on the path to an engineering degree], which – among other things – investigates the reasons of disproportionate drop-away rates of women in this field. (*Lányok útja a műszaki diplomáig – Középiskolai felsőoktatási esélyek és nemi különbségek a műszaki pályaválasztás területén*. Made by Krolify Research Institute for Organisation and Attitude, 2012, [http://www.krolify.hu/OEGENDER/oegender\\_kvali\\_finalfin.pdf](http://www.krolify.hu/OEGENDER/oegender_kvali_finalfin.pdf) – accessed 30 May 2019.)

<sup>229</sup> In her book titled *Háttérben* [In the background] Beáta Nagy has pointed out that, while women can/do enter the fields of technical science or information technology based on their performance, and they can demonstrate astonishing levels of performance quality, the institutional circumstances tend to push them out after a while in most cases. The reason for this is that the organisational environment tends to accept male traits. Women can therefore feel alien, unless they surrender certain aspects of their gender identity (Nagy: *Háttérben*, 59). This is characteristic of workplace organisations in general as well. Based on this, women have fundamentally had two choices in these organisations: either (1) working and behaving like a man in leadership positions, or (2) accepting supporting background roles, duties of lower status and work in assistance or secretary positions, which are virtually equal to “household” roles within the workplace organisation (Nagy: *Szervezet és nemek*, 60).

<sup>230</sup> Block et al.: *Contending With Stereotype Threat*, 577.

<sup>231</sup> Moi, T.: *Feminista irodalomkritika*, in Jefferson, A. – Robey, D. (eds.): *Bevezetés a modern irodalomelméletbe*, Budapest, Osiris, 1995, 250. The personal pathfinding of women, the issue of one’s personal voice, the search for one’s voice and several further difficulties are worth mentioning here. These are problems which have not been overcome to this day. Women grab a pen, write and think in a way that allows them to remain within the theoretical frames appreciated by men, created by their ideologies. I am referring to the shy lyrical self of female authors. “The greater part of what women write about women is mere sycophancy to men” – states Mill in the emblematic and often quoted work *The Subjection of Women* (Kádár, quoted by Takács, I.: *Nők a tudományban – A női tudósok odisszeája, a háttérből „Prokrusztesztész ágyába”, avagy a férfi korrelátum opálos tükre, Metszetek. Társadalomtudományi Folyóirat*, Vol. 6, No. 2017, 148).

If we agree with the above, we can inspect whether the exceptions (female academicians) lead to the reinforcement of traditional assessments and norms, or, on the contrary, whether they have led to the beginning of a transformation of the previously closed, male dominated system in Hungary. Can the tension of the duality between the differences among women and their identification with the female demographic also be observed within the scope of female academicians? How do the members of a seemingly homogenous collective of women differ from each other relative to the question of women, and how can different types be separated?<sup>232</sup> How necessary or important is it for them that the female perspective appears in science? (This is “the particular epistemological viewpoint”).<sup>233</sup> According to the description of this specific viewpoint by Harding, the social perspective and experience of women does not only provide a unique opportunity to unveil the male prepossession, it can also serve to question traditional statements regarding natural and social life. Harding states that neither men nor women are able of fully comprehending and explaining the world, or of exploring the true scope of their possibilities, as long as the sciences keep up their tendency of primarily describing and interpreting the world from the aspect of dominant groups only.<sup>234</sup>

#### THEORETICAL BACKGROUND, FURTHER RESEARCH

##### **The difficulties of the theoretical conceptualisation of women**

The subjective female identity is among the most crucial issues of current feminism. While the category of women plays a pivotal role in every feminist discourse, feminists have continual difficulties in specifically defining the concept of woman, as it is interwoven with the constructs of patriarchal culture: the male-centric logic of patriarchal society has always been present

<sup>232</sup> The majority of the women participating in this survey have been raised in white-collar families, and the large family model was not specific to any of them. The early years and the typical traits of family background could be interpreted in the same (or at least similar) historical context as well. A general tendency could be manifested despite the heavy shift in the political-ideological system. This means that a scientific career, the academic path, is fundamentally a result of their origin, and is significantly affected by cultural capital and the social status of the parents. However, a white-collar background was not a criterion when it comes to starting a career or enrolling in a university.

<sup>233</sup> Cf. Harding, S.: *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1991.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibidem*, 59. And she adds, emphasising the above, that she also views the world through her own cultural “filter”, thinking with the assistance of the hypotheses of said culture.

as a postulate,<sup>235</sup> based on which male power defines the woman as the other and as an object.<sup>236</sup>

Feminist theorists write about the difficulties of conceptualising women up to this day, and conduct endless research to map the female identity, which – similar to the *lapis philosophorum* – seems to be completely intangible.<sup>237</sup> Certain papers attempt to identify the traits of female identity through the imagery of women appearing/represented in science, literature,<sup>238</sup> arts, movies etc. Others try to do the same along the lines of the attitude linked to the abolitionist efforts, the various waves of feminism. Based on ample research and representation of forms of womanhood and the female identity, we can nonetheless logically assume that the actual aim of Sherman<sup>239</sup> for instance, as well as numerous feminist critics was to describe the female identity not as fixed and monolithic, but as fluid, constantly changing (both in space and time) and diverse.<sup>240</sup> Especially so since the content of identity is socially divided to a certain degree. Individuals can differ in whether they accept and/or internalise the social opinion of a certain collective, not to mention the fact that the degree of their identification can show further differences.<sup>241</sup>

I have no means to delve into the detail regarding the above in this chapter, thus I would like to merely survey the key issues, which have also been in the forefront during the analysis of the individual interviews. I will present the popular models mapping the social gender identity below. These helped me interpret the narratives of female scholars, and to give form to the different types which are representative of female scientists in Hungary.

<sup>235</sup> Takács: *Nők a tudományban*, 141.

<sup>236</sup> See also Joó, M.: A feminista elmélet és a (női) test, *Magyar Filozófiai Szemle*, Vol. 54, No. 2, 2010, 64–80; Benjamin, M.: *A Question of Identity: Women, Science, and Literature*, New Brunswick, NJ, Rutgers University Press, 1993. And these signifiers enveloping both internal and external traits have fundamentally affected the way women have created their self-image. Women see themselves as good or bad, talented or talentless, feminine or masculine as a reflection of male assessments. “And they want to fit their image of women in a male-construed history. Feminist theory uses the term *male gaze* as a collective term for analyses in this field” (Joó, quoted by Takács: *Nők a tudományban*, 136).

<sup>237</sup> Cf. Benjamin: *A Question of Identity*.

<sup>238</sup> Showalter, E.: A feminista irodalomtudomány a vadonban. A pluralizmus és a feminista irodalomtudomány, *Helikon*, Vol. 40, No. 4, 1994, 417–442.

<sup>239</sup> The US photographer Cindy Sherman has been continuously dealing with the problem of female identity since the late '70s. Her pictures try to reveal the wide palette of social roles and personalities of women (Benjamin: *A Question of Identity*, 1).

<sup>240</sup> Gender identity is not unitary, see also Van Breen et al.: A Multiple Identity Approach to Gender: Identification with Women, Identification with Feminists, and Their Interaction, *Frontiers in Psychology* 8(1019), 2017, 1–19; Becker–Wagner: Doing Gender Differently.

<sup>241</sup> Van Breen et al.: A Multiple Identity.

### Separating womanhood and femininity, categories of identification with women and feminists

It can be concluded from the subheading that certain authors<sup>242</sup> separate femininity and womanhood from each other. The concept of womanhood refers to biological considerations, sex in our interpretation, while femininity however refers to womanliness, signifying characteristics that are picked up during socialisation, or those characteristics considered feminine.<sup>243</sup> Toril Moi has been able to create the most comprehensive summary as to how the latter are interwoven or differentiated. Moi believes that no matter how we interpret femininity (be it the classical, patriarchal or the new, feminist approach), one thing remains true: that “patriarchalism intends to make us believe there is something we can view as the essence of womanhood, and that this is what we can call femininity. Feminists intend to dissolve this belief however; they posit that women do without a doubt belong to the female gender, this in itself does not mean that they all become feminine.”<sup>244</sup>

Similarly to a number of other social identities, gender carries a strong cultural component as well.<sup>245</sup> Moreover, learning the social gender role and the categorisations attached to it is one of the earliest and strongest forms of the internalisation of a collective identity. People are much more likely to tend to categorise and define others based on their gender rather than their race, age or social status. The foundation of the social gender is discrimination stemming from physical differences.<sup>246</sup> This is exactly why the initial point of papers examining female identity is that while one could not consider them to be a homogenous collective, women do feel some kind of commonality with their own collective (which has developed upon the shared destiny, the shared political-ideological minority identity originating from the onset of suffrage movements). Mária Neményi writes that the situation of women is therefore similar to other disadvantaged and/or minority groups.<sup>247</sup> Feminism is a political discourse, the history of which can be interpreted through the effort to

<sup>242</sup> Moi: *Feminista irodalomkritika*, 240.

<sup>243</sup> Chen and associates, when asking women in their survey to name five characteristics that can be applied to women as a collective, found that those strongly identifying with women have listed the same traits as those identifying themselves to a lesser degree. Those having a stronger identification with women have rather defined themselves with *positive* traits used to describe women, unlike those having a lower commitment to women as a collective. (Chen et al., quoted in: Van Breen et al.: *A Multiple Identity*, 2) This latter phenomenon appeared in group no. 5 of the groups established by me.

<sup>244</sup> Moi: *Feminista irodalomkritika*, 239.

<sup>245</sup> Van Breen et al.: *A Multiple Identity*, 2.

<sup>246</sup> Glick–Fiske: *The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory*, 492.

<sup>247</sup> Acsády: *Megtettük-e azt...*, 179.

create some kind of ideological unity aside from the dissimilarity, and to balance out women's lesser status.<sup>248</sup>

### Models of gender identity

Van Breen and associates have visualised the female identity in two types of orthogonal dimensions: along (1) the identification with women and (2) the identification with feminists.<sup>249</sup>

According to their position, the degree of identification with women (femininity) reflects most appropriately the attitude society associates with being a member of the female collective, and can answer the question "what does it mean to be a woman?" from the aspect of group characteristics, interests and values. It can also forecast the attitudes towards group characteristics, such as femininity and self-stereotypes.<sup>250</sup>

Identification with feminists primarily means everything that "is related to increased perceptions of sexism in society, discontent with current power distributions and the status quo, and increased involvement in collective action".<sup>251</sup> Relying on these conclusions, the authors define the content of identification with feminists on the basis of the group of women the members of which recognise and refuse their own disadvantageous social status, i.e. are taking action against gender inequalities. They show furthermore what it means to be a disadvantaged woman, having an unequal and relative status.<sup>252</sup>

They have finally established four identity profiles based on their surveys. Women (1) identifying neither with women nor with feminists fall into the "non-identifier" group. Women (2) identifying strongly with women but not with

<sup>248</sup> Acsády J.: A hazai feminizmus fénykora – A mozgalom előzményei és kibontakozása a századelőn, in Csapó, I. – Török, M. (eds.): *Feminista Almanach, 2005*, Budapest, MINŐK-NŐTÁRS Alapítvány, 2005; Czibere: Az asszonyok történetének megírásáról...

<sup>249</sup> Van Breen and associates (Van Breen et al.: A Multiple Identity) have studied women through four different samples. The 1st sample consisted of 91 female students of the University of Groningen, the average age of the group was 20.8 years, the youngest being 18, the oldest 48 years old. The 2nd sample consisted of 121 participants from the University of Granada, ages 18 to 50, the average age being 19.75. The 3rd sample included 201 women, of ages 16 to 68, with the average age being 30.6 years. The 4th sample was put together from 200 students, also from the University of Groningen. Their age was between 17 and 31, 19.7 years on average. All four groups have identified much stronger with women than with feminists, but the results of the various surveys have been further analysed in light of a *multiple identity approach*. The analyses further reinforced that identifying with women and identifying with feminists are two distinctly separate aspects of gender identity, which clearly demonstrates that gender identity is far from being unified, even in these groups. Significant overlaps could however be found, as this paper also elaborates.

<sup>250</sup> Van Breen et al.: A Multiple Identity, 19.

<sup>251</sup> Ibidem, 2.

<sup>252</sup> Ibidem.

feminists. These are denominated as “traditional women”. Those, however, who (3) identify strongly with both women and feminists have been assigned to the group of “dual identifiers”. Those women who (4) have a strong identification with feminists but a low identification with women have been associated with the so-called “distinctive feminist” group.<sup>253</sup>

This typology overlaps with the gender identity model (GIM) of Becker and Wagner,<sup>254</sup> who have also created four distinctive groups. These are (1) progressive identifiers, (2) traditional identifiers, (3) progressive non-identifiers and (4) traditional non-identifiers.<sup>255</sup> The GIM is, however, based on an approach conceptualising gender identity through two completely independent dimensions (traditional and progressive), while the aspects taken into consideration by Van Breen and associates (identification with women and feminists) are not completely separate from each other, but instead are orthogonal components of gender identity, and jointly signify identity components.

The model of Becker and Wagner nevertheless defines identification with the cluster of women by its strength on one hand (which can be low or high), and its content (traditional or progressive) on the other.<sup>256</sup>

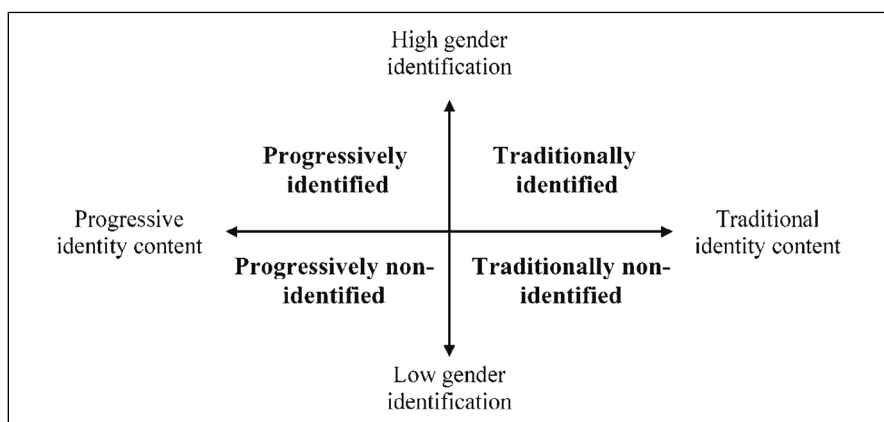


Figure 1. *Gender Identity Model, Becker–Wagner, 2009: 489*

<sup>253</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>254</sup> Becker and Wagner used the concept elaborated on by Susan Condor in her paper *Womanhood as an Aspect of Social Identity: Group Identification and Ideology* as a foundation for creating the GIM. The same paper served to create the categories found in this paper as well.

<sup>255</sup> The sample Becker and Wagner used consisted of 250 women participating voluntarily in the survey. Their age was between 20 and 65 years (an average age of 42 years). 22% of the participants had a high school diploma, 31% a university degree. 82% of the participants were employees, 47% of which had full-time, 53% part-time jobs. 3% of them were homo- or bisexual. The 2nd sample was similar to the 1st: 222 women participated, their age ranged from 16 to 66 years (26 on average). The 3rd sample consisted of 106 women, ages between 16 and 61 years, average age 27 years. The 2nd and 3rd survey was carried out online (Becker–Wagner: *Doing Gender Differently*).

<sup>256</sup> Becker–Wagner: *Doing Gender Differently*; Vida–Kovács: *A token helyzet*, 53.

One possible combination of gender identity is thus (1) the so-called “progressive identifiers” group, which labels women who do not identify with the cluster of women at all, and refuse the traditional definition of women. They claim furthermore that these attributes are artificial and serve to maintain the subordination of women, which is why they intend to redefine them.<sup>257</sup> Those women, however, who belong to the (2) “traditional identifiers” group tend to internalize the traditional gender identities and prefer to stay at home and take care of the family. They define themselves within the scope of traditional male–female relationships, and they therefore accept the contents associated with traditional women. Their attitude and behaviour confirms traditional roles in all areas. Becker and Wagner have pointed out that, according to Condor, women falling into this category do not think (and experience) that their role has a lower status than that of men, neither question their place in society. They in fact think women are positively distinguished from men. This attitude ultimately contributes to the continuation of the status quo. Their quantitative research also established that this group mainly consists of housewives and anti-feminists.<sup>258</sup> The women they labelled (3) “progressive non-identifiers” do not identify with the female role at all. Though the women in this category accept and acknowledge the traits and characteristics considered to be manly, as well as negative stereotypes referring to women, they consider themselves to be exceptions. They consider men to be their reference group. If these women enter a male collective of higher prestige therefore, they identify less with the cluster of women and assimilate, even going as far as striving to be rid of female traits and characteristics. The results of Condor as well as Becker and Wagner show that, because academic success and results are also associated with male traits, women with career and university students are the primary demographic of this group.<sup>259</sup> The fourth group is that of (4) “traditional non-identifiers”. The subjects associated with this group claim women to be dependent, thereby accepting traditional gender roles as well. The authors state that women with this attitude also support the gender status quo, while neither being particularly womanly nor manly; in fact, they identify with their husbands rather than other members of their gender group.<sup>260</sup> This group consists mainly of housewives for whom femininity, and gender in general, plays little to no role.

Van Breen and associates believe on the other hand that an approach establishing multiple identities (the multiple identities approach, referred to henceforth as MIA) is required, which can portray further differences (or overlaps) between gender-specific attitudes, this not being possible with GIM.

<sup>257</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>258</sup> Becker–Wagner: *Doing Gender Differently*, 490.

<sup>259</sup> Becker–Wagner: *Doing Gender Differently*.

<sup>260</sup> Ibidem.

In particular, this is due to the fact that there can be further overlaps beside the prototypes, as well as the specific subdivisions (called gender identity subgroups).<sup>261</sup> Namely, they have established that a) a strong identification with feminists, i.e. the politicised attitude (which can present itself in the attitude towards positive discrimination as well) does not always exclude femininity. (As opposed to how the same appears with the “progressive identifier” group of Becker and Wagner.) They have also pointed out that b) strongly identifying with the cluster of women and being sensitive toward their social status does not automatically strengthen the politicised attitude. Their quantitative sample shows on the other hand that c) critical attitude toward gender stereotypes can mostly be observed among feminists, in particular those not identifying with women.<sup>262</sup> These finer overlaps have been completely left out of the GIM model of Becker and Wagner.

To summarise the above, we can first speak about belonging to the female gender and about femininity (womanliness) as a fundamentally social construct, and secondly about identifying with the cluster of women as well as a certain, politicised identity which is covered by the terms *feminism* and *feminist*. We can furthermore distinguish four clearly separate groups in both approaches. The survey carried out by Van Breen and associates points out, however, that the two key dimensions are not as clearly separated from each other as the model of Becker and Wagner would suggest. The primary question is therefore: what is the relative relationship between personal identity and the identification with the cluster of women and/or feminists, the traditional and the progressive end of the spectrum in my own sample? In other words, we are asking how the “traditional” models mentioned above appear in a group that can be considered homogenous at first sight.

#### RESULTS: RELATION TOWARDS THE WOMAN QUOTA

Identification with the cluster of women can in the current sample be observed most significantly in the attitude toward the means applicable (or to be applied) in order to raise the number of female academicians, the woman quota (this can be discerned from the identification with feminists as well). As previously mentioned, this does not mean that those who are not supportive of positive discrimination do not identify with the cluster of women or feminists at all, merely that the group identity presents itself more explicitly with those arguing for the woman quota. This is why I first split the subjects of this research into two groups from the perspective of whether they act collectively

<sup>261</sup> These overlaps can be influenced by a number of other factors, the most characteristic one being culture or the social-economic context, as well as personal life experience.

<sup>262</sup> Van Breen et al.: A Multiple Identity, 19.

with the aim to change the Academy's regulations, or stay indifferent with regard to the question of gender and science. We can distinguish between those (1) not in favour of positive discrimination and (2) those standing *expressis verbis* beside the woman quota.

(1) Not in favour of positive discrimination (contra woman quota): The starting point for the female scholars was the importance of establishing equal conditions, but the majority can picture this with measures that do not include positive discrimination (woman quota), this even being something to which they explicitly objected.

*Only because... I am a woman? [...] I would rather not [...] the weaker are in need of help, and women are no weaker in science. I don't want any positive discrimination!* (Subject no. 22, natural sciences)

*I would honestly not want to enter due to the woman quota. I have written lots of books and other work, which I think can be compared with other academics in terms of quantity, in order for me not to require a woman quota.* (Subject no. 25, natural sciences)

*I don't want somebody to be appointed due to such a contingency, their performance also has to be checked, if it is okay, it is okay, if it isn't, it isn't. But I should not simply be appointed to a position because I am a woman. Nobody needs that. This makes us even more haughty. The quota is nonsense.* (Subject no. 21, natural sciences)

(2) Pro woman quota: There were only a select few considering merit as well as recognising the disadvantageous position of women, which they had mainly experienced in their professional life (see also the different perceptions of equality),<sup>263</sup> who would therefore accept positive discrimination as a tool to reach equality.

*Quotas serve to remind us that there are women in the world as well, with some among them who might be qualified for this position, meaning that they remind male society – who are in a vast majority in these situations – to at least look around. True, quotas hold the danger of becoming counterselective on occasion. But I think the benefits outweigh the disadvantages.* (Subject no. 1, social sciences)

*It doesn't matter what we call it, but I find it is clear that a woman has more difficulties reaching a certain point right from the start than a man. This needs to be*

<sup>263</sup> There are two distinct approaches to equality, the liberal and the radical perception. The key difference between the two is that the latter also supports positive discrimination in creation of an equal field (alongside honest measures) (see also Nagy: *Nők a vezetésben*, 52).

*addressed somehow, it can even be positive discrimination, I honestly don't care how we name it.* (Subject no. 3, natural sciences)

Since identification with the cluster of women cannot only be interpreted and identified from the attitude toward positive discrimination, not least because efforts to raise the number of female scholars can be accompanied with other measures as well (like changing the electoral regulation of the Academy), it became clear during analysis that a more polished method is required. The additional dimensions created along the high or low intensity of identification with the cluster of women are primarily shaped based on GIM. I find it important to stress that the GIM introduced and applied in this paper has merely assisted in grouping the Subjects. The separate categories can be applied in my sample by necessity, they are however far from being sufficient (especially due to the method being qualitative analysis). GIM-types can therefore not cover every aspect that presented itself in the analysed sample. As a consequence, the types to be found below have been created using both the models and approaches (MIA) mentioned above as well as my own conclusions.

It became clear during the analysis of the interviews that, despite the fact that all interviewees have similar family backgrounds (supporting parents, parents with an academic degree), have the same academic title (MSc of the MTA), had similar opportunities due to the historical context (state socialism), and had faced the same political-ideological obstacles during their careers, they nevertheless have vastly different opinions on several issues with regards to certain aspects of the social role of women. That is why they could at first be grouped similarly to women in a larger, more diverse population (as appearing in GIM by Becker and Wagner as well as MIA applied by Van Breen and associates).

#### GROUPS ESTABLISHED FROM THE GENDER IDENTITY MODEL

As previously mentioned, four groups were initially created with the assistance of GIM. It was clear during the process that the term “traditional” only refers to family roles and not to career in the sample. The path of female scholars preferring traditional roles in their family lives can be described by the so-called “dual attachment” model, specific to women who find a “family career” equally important to their “labour market career”.<sup>264</sup> Gender identification was found to be both low and high in the analysed sample, while being traditional or progressive in terms of content.<sup>265</sup>

<sup>264</sup> Koncz: A mainstream nőpolitika szükség-e?, 469.

<sup>265</sup> Cf. Becker–Wagner: Doing Gender Differently.

(*Type no. 1*) This group demonstrates high identification with the cluster of women while being both traditional and progressive. With regards to the female scholars analysed, this means that, while they identify with traditional female roles when it comes to parenthood, they are progressive toward the scientific field and career (“dual attachment” type).

(*Type no. 2*) Identification with the cluster of women shows a high level in the next group as well, but it is more traditional in nature. The male and female attitudes are separated in every aspect (family life and career), meaning they find the phenomenon of horizontal segregation (especially regarding leadership positions and work-related attitudes) natural and necessary. They do not consider the separation of professions by gender as something unnatural, as both men and women have different competences and possibilities both due to biological and social reasons.<sup>266</sup> They add, however, that these groupings ought not turn into social disadvantages (“essentialist identifiers”).

(*Type no. 3*) The third group can also be considered a unified group with regard to the attitude toward womanhood, but they address the current reparations. Identification with the cluster of women is high, its content is, however, exclusively progressive (“progressive identifiers”).

(*Type no. 4*) Members of the last group are completely indifferent regarding the gender issue. Identification with the cluster of women is particularly low, and it has a progressive nature. The members of this group are in favour of the classical equality (“classical equality” type).

The categories will be elaborated on further within the scope of issues like essentializing discourse and gender stereotypes, their full or partial denial, the politicised attitude as well as “norm violations” and atypical roles. The scholars subject to this survey can thus ultimately be grouped not in the four types above, but in five distinctly separate categories, which have given a final view of the female scholar types. The common feature of the five new groups listed below is that – based on their statements – the members have never felt any disadvantage whatsoever in their scientific career merely because they are women. Furthermore, all interviewees agree that the politics of science, which creates a foundation for leadership positions or the academic electoral process, to name a few examples, has to be explicitly separated from actual scientific achievements, i.e. the “pure science” and research work.

<sup>266</sup> Koncz: A munkaerőpiac nemek szerinti szegregációjának jellemzői, 74.

## MULTIPLE TYPES OF FEMALE IDENTITY AMONG FEMALE SCHOLARS

**1st group: the “dual attachment” type**

The first group is formed from female scholars who have a fundamentally traditional approach when it comes to the role of a woman within a family. The group characteristics described in GIM with regards to women preferring traditional female roles, i.e. supporting the gender status quo in many aspects<sup>267</sup> can be considered true for this group. They do not differentiate between men and women, however, when it comes to career and the academic field. They are thus in favour of equality and progressive in this latter aspect. This is exactly why they consider academic or leadership roles important. The interviewees within this group accept – and believe – the fact that women need to work much harder if they intend to achieve the same level of respect their male peers achieve, primarily due to them having an opinion that women “must” deal with the majority of household tasks, which they consider completely natural:

*Women must obviously deal with most of the work around the house. As it happens to be in my life, I need to serve the needs of ten men at the moment [...], my husband, my three sons and my six grandsons. Had I not learned to work tirelessly in my childhood, I would certainly be in a difficult position right now. (Subject no. 10, DSc, technical sciences)*

*So I practically think my bringing the child to the nursery is an integral part of the regular womanly tasks. (Subject no. 23, natural sciences)*

*It doesn't matter from the perspective of oeuvre if one is at home for a year or so. I intended to savour it in fact. I always held the mothership role in high regard and found it important. The scientific career [...] is important of course, but it isn't the most important facet of one's life. (Subject no. 27, social sciences)*

They have also stressed that while the support of the family is important to them, they still consider that if a woman stumbles upon issues due to the additional workload stemming from the female role, it is not for the Academy to deal with them, and positive discrimination is far from being the appropriate method either. These difficulties need to be handled in the earliest stages of a career, especially because nobody will be interested past a certain point in what way and through what sacrifices one achieved the academic DSc degree or an academic position.

<sup>267</sup> Becker–Wagner: Doing Gender Differently.

*I am of course raising my sons in the meantime, who say they haven't suffered many disadvantages from me doing all those other things as well, but the nights are long and I can get by with very little sleep. So I had time to do something in those nightly hours [...] As far as I am concerned, I always enjoyed fulfilling the role of a woman, and I cannot name any negative aspects.* (Subject no. 10, DSc, technical sciences)

All this ultimately reflects the dual expectations, typical in Hungarian society, that a woman needs to work while fulfilling the traditional roles of mother and wife at the same time.<sup>268</sup> The group mainly consists of natural science scholars.

### **2nd group: the “essentialist identifier” type**

The second group includes female scholars who find there is a fundamental difference between men and women in terms of how they comply to their tasks and how their preferences and value assessments develop in their lives. They think this “otherness” is present between men and women not only in family life, but in public life as well. Members of this group state that to lead is fundamentally not a womanly task. Moreover, they believe that women do not even want to become leaders, due to their nature. Their attitude towards academic positions differs, but they typically do not consider it to be a goal nor a particularly important aspect.

*I feel that female peers are not that ambitious. We tend to feel comfortable in our cozy little labs, and the additional challenges of being in a leadership position do not make us any happier, but represent an added burden instead, which we don't necessarily want enthusiastically.* (Subject no. 23, natural sciences)

The question is why the described pattern can be observed during the selection for leadership positions: is it because society does not allow women to prevail, does not accept them as equals, or rather because they do not particularly strive to reach higher themselves? This is difficult to inspect. It can however be assumed that both aspects have an effect to a certain degree.

*This holds women back from two directions, society will of course not ask them to take on leadership roles. On the other hand, they don't want to be leaders either, because the stigma of the career-driven, tough, woman leader is still present, and “Oh Lord, I just wish I had no woman for a boss”. But a woman of course needs to be a little more assertive if she intends to lead, say, a hospital department. And if*

<sup>268</sup> Haraszty, quoted by Faragó, P.: *Nők a tudományban. A tudós nők helyzete Magyarországon a 20. században*, in Balogh, M. – S. Nagy, K. (eds.): *Asszonyorsok a 20. században*, Budapest, BME Szociológia és Kommunikáció Tanszék, 2000, 27.

*she is assertive, that means her womanhood suffers from it.* (Subject no. 20, human sciences)

My observations lead me to believe that the different attitude toward leadership roles is primarily not based on the biologically determined differences men and women are born with, but on individual character traits stemming from personality and the persona as well as socialisation.

*An example from my own life: I never wanted to become a leader, I have trouble enough as it is, I don't need to be responsible for the troubles of others as well [...] And to appear in meetings, to decide the fate of people, do I hire them or not, are they sick or not, this is not something for me.* (Subject no. 21, natural sciences)

*My other motive for not accepting the position of department head was that there were cutbacks back then and certain peers had to be sent away, and this was something I couldn't possibly deal with.* (Subject no. 16, social sciences)

The literature links attributes like understanding, intuitiveness, empathy, sentimentality, conflict avoidance and paying attention to emotions – mainly associated with women – to failings in leadership. Members of this group have all unequivocally stated that women are excellent scholars and researchers, but no leaders. A psychological explanation can be linked to the above, which interprets differences in social roles with certain conflicts of character attached to both genders. What does it mean for example to be a good leader, a good academician, dean, physicist, etc.? Based on this myth, the image of a good leader, dean, physicist, etc. is almost exclusively linked to traits that are typically manly, considered manly or are commonly found in men. And this is certainly opposing the question “what does it mean to be a woman?”. The term<sup>269</sup> “think manager–think male” (TMTM)<sup>270</sup> has been made famous regarding leadership roles. Given, however, that women do not even wish to be leaders in their opinion, they deny the existence of any real conflict between the two genders in this area.

*I am a great second. For example, I can give good ideas, etc., but if I were to take a step further up, I have doubts I would be capable of exerting that type of leadership attitude.* (Subject no. 24, human sciences)

One of the academicians interviewed – who is almost an archetypical example of this category – views the difference theory of Deborah Tanenn

<sup>269</sup> As I have mentioned in the second chapter.

<sup>270</sup> Ryan et al.: Think crisis–think female.

acceptable. She has – quoting psychological and psycho-linguistic experiments – elaborated for example how men and women practice different strategies in their thinking patterns and communication. She claims that women are born with the trait of considering the establishment of relationships and friendships to be paramount. She states that this can even be observed in kindergarten, where:

*Girls share secrets, toys, etc. with each other, whereas boys already start competing, fighting with each other, creating a hierarchy from the get-go. Not only in terms of having an alpha male, but a complete set of subordinations, a pecking order below that. With boys, the aim of every single act of communication is to figure out who can reach a dominant position. And this applies to their relationship toward women as well. If a couple gets lost, for example, it is always the female asking which the right way is, a male would never ask that, because that would render him in a subordinate position. (Subject no. 4, social sciences)*

Tannen sums up the assumed differences between men and women in her infamously heavily criticised book *You Just Don't Understand*, which are divided into six groups. The thoughts presented in the book all manifest themselves to a degree with every single interviewee belonging to this type, the members of which tend to group male and female characteristics and traits in a fundamentally similar way. Tannen has contrasted the fundamental otherness of the two genders with the help of categories she invented, thus creating opposition pairs like (1) independence (men) – intimacy (women), (2) advice (men) – understanding (women), (3) information (men) – feelings (women), (4) status (men) – support (women), (5) orders (men) – proposal (women) as well as (6) conflict (men) – compromise (women). Tannen presents men as more independent and competing with each other, whereas women prefer intimacy and sentiments. Furthermore, men often apply confrontation as the instrument for reaching a solution to an argument or other situations, thereby conveying and shaping their social status.<sup>271</sup> The opposites listed above can be added to the series of well-known, ossified binary oppositions associated with gender (like women: sensitivity, empathy, matter, body, irrationality, versus men: mind, logos, form, leader, logic, rationality). And if we assume the characteristics and traits associated with stereotypes regarding men are much more applicable to the image of a leader, we can explain why the majority of women (and men alike) think a leadership role is something fundamentally not for women.

<sup>271</sup> Tannen, D.: *You Just Don't Understand. Women and Men in Conversation*, London, Virago Press, 1991.

*I would not have been able to handle conflicts in the department. That has always been the area of authoritarian men. (Subject no. 8, human sciences)*

*I feel that if I'd had any ambitions for a leadership position, I would have reached it. But I have a conviction that the majority of women would not want that. They wouldn't be effective enough. So this is not the same as recognising scientific performance. I expect women to be acknowledged in that aspect too. But a leadership position, that's different, I don't know how many women aspire to that. I don't think too many do. (Subject no. 4, social sciences)*

They could actually be matched to the “traditional identifiers” due to their strong identification with women, identification with a certain group of feminists can however still not be excluded. One of the benefits of MIA (multiple identity approach) is that it points out the possibility of identifying with women without that necessarily leading to politicisation. This distinction of womanhood is supported by further works in gender literature as well as the feminist movements themselves. Certain strains of feminism namely put a huge emphasis on womanhood as the field of positive discernment from men (e.g. difference feminism), while others (as it appears with the 4th type, see below) undermine it.<sup>272</sup> It can also be established that the attitude of female scholars in this group can from many aspects be described with the axioms phrased in post-feminism. This means the difference between the genders needs to be reinforced positively, and the individual otherness of women has to be acknowledged as well.<sup>273</sup>

Most are in agreement that the fundamental differences are enhanced by certain further factors such as a woman having a child. They think this circumstance virtually rules out their being a good leader simultaneously as well.

*Besides, I am not that certain that girls really want to be leaders at all. Because if you are a boss, you need to be present at every single meeting and gathering where there must be some kind of leadership conflict [...] You always need to be there, because if you aren't, nobody is going to stand up for your own people. And not all women can do this. There is a tremendous amount of work with children, and that always takes priority in their case. (Subject no. 21, natural sciences)*

This was further reinforced by a female scholar (Subject no. 29, natural sciences), who – speaking about her own experience – stated that she was only able to give 100% until there was a call informing her that her child has a fever. It wouldn't matter if she'd sent someone in her stead in such cases, for her mind

<sup>272</sup> Van Breen et al.: *A Multiple Identity*, 18.

<sup>273</sup> Kádár, J.: Feminista nézőpont az irodalomtudományban, *Helikon*. Vol. 40, No. 4, 1994, 407–416.

as a mother was not completely present after that, and this could be considered a huge disadvantage in a leadership role. All of my subjects have also reinforced the (sexist) myth claiming the different character traits of men and women are manifest in their relationship towards tasks and duties.

*Men tend to claw at the walls sooner, for example, if they need to shoulder the office duties. Women are more likely to handle them than men. Perhaps also because women have already learned that they need to find a path between the set gates. They grow up with the notion that they need to find the back doors, because they cannot push forward otherwise. Thus, they practice it in the family. Women tend to be on the power trip in the family. This is a typical female trait. (Subject no. 21, natural sciences)*

The above makes it apparent for me that, while the interviewees refer to the “typical” traits they are born with, they – albeit mostly indirectly – admitted to these rather being “acquired” traits (cf. they “learned” that they “need to find a path between the set gates” [Subject no. 21, natural sciences], “womanhood suffers from it” [Subject no. 20, social sciences]). These categorisations reflect the known and taught codes, philosophy, deeply rooted prejudices of the society to a much larger extent, and are not necessarily built upon biological differences. Most members of this group also elaborated that their main goal throughout their career was to not detach themselves from research. Moreover, some argued that, in their opinion, achievement is very closely linked to self-respect in the case of men (see also the occurrence of hegemonic masculinity and “libido dominandi”<sup>274</sup>). Their experience shows that men gladly take on a committee position when women would consider that wasted time. Moreover, they stress in every single case that they are not leadership material, while lots of men are very happy if they can be a “boss”:

*They feel they have found their place in such a case. Women tend to consider this to be a burden. (Subject no. 8, human sciences)*

The members of this group have a common opinion that this otherness is completely in its right place, for women and men are fundamentally different. This does not mean for the group members, however, that they represent something of lesser value, only something different. Women need to prove their worth only in the scientific field and not in leadership positions.

*Well, I think we just need to show in scientific communication that we are better.*

<sup>274</sup> Cf. Hadas, M.: A libido academica narcizmus (Pierre Bourdieu: *Férfiuralom*), *Replika* (47–48), 2002, 175–194.

*Meaning, that our theory is the right theory, and that's it. This is how boundaries can be dismantled. (Subject no. 4, social sciences)*

We can observe that the essentializing discourse in these cases is clearly based on binary oppositions which serve as an organic part of our culture. These oppositions in turn trace the gender inequalities to natural, i.e. biological causes, thereby deeming them unchangeable, inevitable and deterministic.<sup>275</sup> This argumentation states that “the body is a gender/sexual entity, sexuality is co-extensive with life, all of its facets are transfixated with gender. Gender differences present themselves in observation as well as experience, expression, movement, etc.”<sup>276</sup> According to this, the two genders are not only essentially (biologically) different from each other, but consequently different in psychological terms and in their social roles too. This is the reason within this argumentation framework that the majority of gender stereotypes and the closed nature of the “men’s world” (scientific panels, for example) have not completely shifted even after the declaration of legal equality. The stereotypical, general “knowledge” regarding women is continuously present in language, the everyday discourses, texts, media, etc. and explains the classical male–female hierarchy, the gender-segregation of work with natural differences to this day.

In summary, regarding the female scholars in this group, we can state that they have experienced substantial differences between the male and female attitude towards work and leadership. As a result, they believe men and women have to take on roles in society which, though not in a fundamentally hierarchical relation to each other, are different nonetheless. As it has already been mentioned in the second chapter, according to Katalin Koncz, men and women have different competences both due to biological and social reasons, the gender-based separation and employment is a natural consequence of this. She states the social inequalities are only caused by labour market mechanisms that shape these differences into social disadvantages<sup>277</sup> and devalue them. Most members of this group highlight that women do not need to be scholars in the same sense men do.

*When I think about it, how many people say ‘wow, what an arrogant woman, I would never marry that woman’ when speaking about really successful women. And perhaps we don’t really want to be considered like that. (Subject no. 4, social sciences)*

*A very fierce woman can no doubt count with more disinclination than a very fierce man. Because someone being very fierce and aggressive doesn’t fit into the image of*

<sup>275</sup> Czibere: *Az asszonyok történetének megírásáról...*, 22.

<sup>276</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, quoted by Joó: *A feminista elmélet*, 68.

<sup>277</sup> Koncz: *A munkaerőpiac nemek szerinti szegregációjának jellemzői*, 74.

*femininity, or at least what we associate with the term. But I think a good leader does not need to be aggressive, does not have to be hard as stone. That's no requirement. If a woman is like that however, she will be considered less of a woman. Whereas a man is still a man, even if he behaves very aggressively.* (Subject no. 5, social sciences)

They have also addressed the dilemmas attached to the *token* role as well as the problems resulting from the lack of models:

*What remains if there is no behavioural pattern for women to follow? That will be a very individual life path. I have to then take the male behavioural pattern, and I step over everyone. Or I attempt to prevail in female career roles, which is not something I can reconcile with my own ambitions.* (Subject no. 16, social sciences)

The group mainly consists of academic DScs but there are a few academicians among them as well.

### **3rd group: the “progressive identifier” type**

The opinion of researchers associated with this group is the exact opposite of that held by the members of the previous group. They explicitly deny the theory of psychology stating that the interest fields of boys and girls are completely different. They agree that these – or similar – essentialist arguments and theories maintain the same gender-based hierarchy they aim to change.

They state that these roles are acquired because they reinforce the assumption of the members of a given group being substantially different.<sup>278</sup> According to their viewpoint, the majority of the differences built upon the social role of gender is exclusively a factor of nurture and not nature. Therefore, they deny the opinion shared uniformly in the previous group that states that women are not fit to be leaders. Identification with the cluster of women is high in their case, and they find it important to raise the proportion of female academicians. Thus, they completely fit the “dual identifier” category of MIA, meaning those who have an equally strong identification with both women and feminists.

*What I find weird is that they say things like the reason they don't endorse women for this and that position and the reason they always disappear from the top of the pyramid is because women don't actually want that at all. Well I am not in agreement with that. There are evidently some who say that they rather want a family with five kids, [...] but that's actually no ground for refusal either, there are*

<sup>278</sup> Phillips, quoted in Kovács–Szabó: Társadalmi nem és szexizmusok, 44.

*some who have four children and are great scholars, good leaders, they get by [...] I cannot accept this opinion, that women don't want this, it is just not true. (Subject no. 7, natural sciences)*

They have all added that women are equally capable of prevailing in any profession that was completely appropriated by men. Cultural codes, the traditional views of society are the primary sources of unequal opportunities – according to the interviewees in this group – and only these lead to self-discrimination, self-stereotyping, as well as “stereotypical threats”.<sup>279</sup>

*And much later, just recently, when we got together for a girls' day with other female peers, it turned out that four out of five of us sitting there from the research centre, who were already senior physicists, had initially started to study something else [...] we thought it was not something for us [...] so most of us went to study chemistry. (Subject no. 9, natural sciences)*

*A girl did not have enough self-esteem to simply jump headfirst into physics back then. Out of the five of us there was only one girl who went to study physics regardless of being a woman, but she said she was doing it only because even her physics teacher told her not to go, that it's not something for women, upon which she of course responded “well I'll show that I can indeed do it”. (Subject no. 9, natural sciences)*

As it can clearly be seen, they are the ones who advocate for speedy change – i.e. a fast raise in the proportion of women both in respect of MTA membership and leadership positions – the most. But they do suppose other measures should be applied to reach this goal instead of applying the woman quota.

*I'm not saying we need positive discrimination for them to enter the Academy, but there should at least not be negative discrimination. (Subject no. 6, natural sciences)*

*Because okay, I do accept it essentially that the career needs to be addressed, I mean some assistance is needed for getting a career with programs, age limits and such. But this will only bear some results in maybe 20 years at the Academy. And something has to be achieved by then too, right? I know there are plenty of women who would more than match the criteria, and are on par with the majority of male academicians. So I have sworn to myself to nominate only women now too.<sup>280</sup> Because*

<sup>279</sup> Steele–Aronson: Stereotype threat.

<sup>280</sup> The selection process of Academy members is based on nominations. “Member nominations are done by the scientific departments of the Academy. Those who receive a sufficient number of nominations from domestic academicians can become nominees”, see also Act 1994. / XL. about the Hungarian Academy of Sciences: 1994. évi XL. törvény a Magyar Tudományos Akadémiáról, <https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=99400040.tv> (accessed 12 May 2021).

*it is quite simple, I always tell my male peers to nominate women too, this is the only solution, this is what we've got. (Subject no. 7, natural sciences)*

According to them, the low ratio of women at the Academy can primarily remain – and the existing inequality can reproduce itself – because these positions have traditionally always been reserved for men, who are constantly re-electing each other in most positions (especially in leadership roles).

This group also included those few female scholars who think a woman quota based on merit could also prove to be a solution (as opposed to the others, see also the dual division above). They state that this particular tool of positive discrimination could be necessary to avoid scientists who are fit to be academicians crumbling away solely because they are biologically women, and also because the regulations of the institutions are still based on the traditional male–female differences – even if only in an indirect manner –, like the electoral system of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. They have primarily argued that, as the male–female family roles are unequal, women have a disadvantage by default, and this inequality of opportunities needs to be mitigated with some kind of a legal move regulated from the top.

*Men and women are not equal due to childbirth being the task of a woman, which by extension means the pregnancy period and taking care of the newborn. This makes it so unjust – I mean, speaking about scholars in general –, so this is an absolutely unjust situation, and there is no way to think that if one doesn't take any action, some kind of justice will somehow emerge. These young women who are very interested in the scientific career but also very much want to have a family need to be assisted somehow. After all, this is normal, right? (Subject no. 3, natural sciences)*

*And what I see is actually that there is a young woman with a child, starting with her career, which is all right in itself. The trouble starts when she is appointed with a larger program before turning 30, and then she has that choice to have a second child or keep going, and this is really inhuman [...] so I find it terrible. (Subject no. 9, natural sciences)*

The woman quota has not been pushed to the foreground without any reflection, but as a certain necessary, pragmatic solution. We need to add that this group consists of only female academicians. We can thus assume that their majority feels to have an especially large responsibility to assist in raising the proportion of female peers. They have a better insight into inequalities and are part of the process.

We can see here that identifying with feminists led to supporting more radical, collective action, and that there is a substantial critical attitude toward gender stereotypes.<sup>281</sup>

#### **4th group: the “classical equality” type (progressive non-identifiers)**

A separate category was composed of those few interviewees who deemed that in science there is no need to care about who is male and who is female. They all stressed that they are present in their field not as women, but as representatives of themselves and their scientific area. Identification with the cluster of women was at its lowest in this group. They exclusively stressed legal equality, which they find to be sufficient for women as well. They find themselves to be more akin to their husbands / other men in the profession, or they did not address the issue of gender at all. The identification with a professional identity considered to be “manly” is clearly present in this model.<sup>282</sup> The “progressive non-identifiers” of GIM (“non-identifiers” according to the multi-dimensional model, i. e. the MIA) identify neither with women nor feminists. They can however be linked to a branch of feminism that undermines womanhood and emphasises only legal (classical) equality. This is why all of them are explicitly against the gender issue appearing in the scientific field at all. They firmly state that gender is not relevant in science at all. Which is why they are completely indifferent to the number of female academicians.

*I don't really like this “women need to be academicians too!” initiative. I think nobody intends to dance, so why is it not completely irrelevant who is a man or a woman at the Academy? If they really intend to be gender neutral, the question of how many men and women there are should not even arise. Whoever has the ambition on one hand and the merit on the other, should become an Academician, regardless of them being a man or a woman. (Subject no. 22, natural sciences)*

They think the numbers are misleading, because performance is all that matters. Therefore, the fact that there are only a few women at the academy is not considered an issue by them. They in fact emphasise that if women are really successful in their own field, that minor proportion should be just as sufficient in shaping a model role. They are in agreement in the opinion that receiving any sort of advantage solely because of being (born as) a biological woman is degrading and counter-productive. Their conclusion is that the issue

<sup>281</sup> Van Breen et al.: *A Multiple Identity*, 9.

<sup>282</sup> Becker–Wagner: *Doing Gender Differently*.

of social gender presents a disadvantage to women who intend to create something substantial and impactful as researchers:

*I attended a conference where the topic was women, and all the speakers were women. I don't wish to be stuck in this ghetto which we seal around ourselves. Because we are then the ones creating the glass ceiling. So I've stood beside the aspects of classical equality. It might be old-fashioned, but I am no friend of positive discrimination, the feminist philosophy stressing or underpinning womanhood. But this is of course one approach among many. I don't want anyone to prioritise me as a woman: neither as an academician nor as a conference speaker. (Subject no. 25, social sciences)*

Their opinion is that there is no need to differentiate between male and female scholars in science. Their experience does not reflect any disadvantages they have suffered due to their gender, because they have always been judged by their publications and other achievements. If, let us say, a Hungarian name appears on a scientific paper abroad, it will not suggest anything about the gender of the author to the audience:

*Because if one is not well known, it virtually doesn't matter what their name is, meaning their gender won't matter either. And this proves that the only important thing is what the scholar writes down, and what formulae, abstractions, results they have come up with. (Subject no. 31, natural sciences).*

The experience of the members – being mostly representatives of natural sciences – shows that after they had entered their particular departments and received their degree, gender was less of an influencing factor for them as opposed to other scientific fields.<sup>283</sup>

*It absolutely doesn't matter who came up with a theorem or a mathematical theorem. I had proven a certain problem, deduced it, it was published internationally and is being quoted, they did not check who it comes from, it worked. (Subject no. 28, natural sciences)*

*There is ample degree of meritocracy in our scientific field. Meaning that if someone shows sufficient performance, it is difficult to – that is, nobody even does – raise an argument against them. (Subject no. 22, natural sciences)*

This statement is exponentially valid in the case of natural sciences, whereas in the authorship of literary and philosophical papers the authors themselves

<sup>283</sup> All other female scholars agree mostly with this latter statement, as they have never experienced any gender-based disadvantages with regards to their scientific performance.

have always had a much bigger role, pushing the subject more to the foreground. The value of such scientific publications often depends on who wrote them under what circumstances. This is also proven by the fact that the majority of female scholars grouped into this category is representative of natural sciences, which are considered manly. The difference with the other models has presented itself in another aspect as well: while the earlier groups found the academic role and raising the number of female academicians (to a lesser or larger extent or even absolutely) to be important, the members of this group have not addressed this question during their career at all, and they have ambitioned neither academic nor leadership roles themselves.

### 5th group: the “alternative” type

This type is not included in the GIM, and it differs from the 3rd group labelled “progressive identifiers” in one aspect: identification with women presents itself much more radically and fundamentally differently. This is why I found the creation of a separate group justified, drawing attention to these significant differences, which can also be interpreted as a reaction to recent social changes.

As has already been mentioned in the theoretical section of the chapter, previous surveys show that radical collective action in the interest of improving the social status of women needs to be in positive relation with the politicised attitudes, the identification with feminists, whereas it is negatively related to identification with women – but only in case the radical action is considered to be atypical by women from a gender perspective. The 2nd group, labelled “essentialist identifiers”, can be considered the best example for the above.<sup>284</sup> The identification with both feminists and women presents itself equally radically in the alternative group however, and means exclusively positive collective identification with regards to the latter.

Women in the alternative group (only a few female scholars could be considered as belonging here) accept the traits labelled “masculine”, as well as the female stereotypes, but they typically do not separate traditionally womanly and manly attitudes based on gender.

*I was a pronouncedly manly leader. Even though my looks create motherly associations. But a mother can allow herself to be manly as well. (Subject no. 17, social sciences)*

They consider women to be both manly or womanly, just as a man can be either as well. Which means belonging to the female gender does not

<sup>284</sup> Eagly et al., quoted by Van Breen et al.: A Multiple Identity, 1.

necessarily imply her becoming feminine too<sup>285</sup> and vice versa. They consider this to be merely a question of personality, character, habitude, and not the biological gender.<sup>286</sup>

*I, for example, had a male peer who could only accept me as a leader if I was behaving manly, even when driving a car. But there is no such thing, that men are only manly and women only womanly. A woman can be masculine as well. But the majority is full of prejudices. Due to their childhood experiences, their models, like how their father behaved, etc. (Subject no. 17, social sciences)*

A problem arose with relation to the attitudes typical of this grouping. Since the gender of a woman is the most apparent difference, it would be worth mentioning why placing the female body into the focal point of identity research can be misleading.<sup>287</sup> Based on the statements made by the interviewees grouped into this category, if the genders definitely need to be discerned, women have the more important roles – all things considered – due to their motherly (biological) obligations. They think women to be positively different from men, because a woman is a creator, existence itself is therefore tied to the female continuity. They particularly stressed femininity as the area of positive demarcation, meaning femininity and identifying with feminists do not necessarily exclude each other in this case, unlike with the “essentialist identifiers” group:

*No woman has to ever prove – just as a mother never has to ask – what life is, what the purpose of their life is; men do. (Subject no. 17, social sciences)*

*We were sitting in the studio of a male painter. The wife – a painter as well – brought us cookies, took care of everyone, served the guests, as a good wife ought to. She was a better painter by miles than her husband. And besides, she even gave birth to two children. (Subject no. 17, social sciences)*

This also means that if a woman happens to have a more successful career than a man or her husband, the traditional roles will still apply at home.

With regards to intergroup behaviour, Henri Tajfel (among others) states that “an individual will tend to remain a member of a group [...] if these groups have some contribution to make to the positive aspects of his social identity;

<sup>285</sup> Moi: *Feminista irodalomkritika*, 236.

<sup>286</sup> Derrida elaborated on a Heideggerian interpretation referring to the 72nd fragment of *The Gay Science* that states that Nietzsche considers the formation itself a manly act, just as the whole of tradition. But if all that is shaped and created is manly, that means even the pro-creating mother is a masculine mother (cf. Derrida, J.: *Éperons. Nietzsche stílusai*, Athenaeum 1992, I. kötet, 3. füzet, Budapest, T-Twins 1992, 172–213). As such, it disunites itself from the general, social category of woman (Takács: *Nők a tudományban*).

<sup>287</sup> Showalter: *A feminista irodalomtudomány*, 427.

i.e. to those aspects of it from which he/she derives some satisfaction.”<sup>288</sup> Interestingly, a certain attitude can be observed by the representatives of the alternative type, which was detailed by Tajfel with regards to the intergroup behaviour in general, despite belonging to the cluster of women being fundamentally different from the groups he was researching. Still, an enhanced accent regarding the positive differentness of women (as opposed to the other types) is equally present in this model as well.

*There is no equality, as men cannot bear children [...] this distinction is thus always in favour of women.* (Subject no. 29, natural sciences)

We can see that gender-associated attributes can be indicators of their social roles as well, thereby appointing the position of an individual. After analysing the conversations and following the logic of the interviewees present in this group, some questions can be raised. Namely: How and on what foundation have the artificial signifiers of social gender and the characteristics rooted in biological gender shaped into attributes, and how can the manly–womanly attitudes be categorised? How can we state that a particular social action, performance, characteristic is manly and/or womanly? Why is creation “masculine”, if biology has determined the woman to be the creator (the one giving life), and why does the man not turn “feminine” by the act of creation? These questions appear in a similar manner in the modern theory of sense. “And because this is a type of question – let’s call it historical still – whose conception, formation, gestation, labour, we can today only glimpse. And I say these words with my eyes turned, certainly, towards the operations of childbirth.”<sup>289</sup> These problems are thereby touching onto the fields of narratives and linguistic discrimination. We could consider the following quotation: “Certainly metaphors of literary maternity predominated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries [...] Describing Thackeray’s plan for *Henry Esmond*, for example, Douglas Jerrold jovially remarked, ‘You have heard, I suppose, that Thackeray is big with twenty parts, and unless he is wrong in his time, expects the first installment at Christmas’.”<sup>290</sup>

The interpretations of the interviewees allow us to conclude that nature and society are separated in their minds, and, according to their reading, the woman is the creator in nature – identified with family – while in society, the public sphere, the task of creation falls onto the man. Consequently, the real

<sup>288</sup> Tajfel, H.: Csoportközi viselkedés, társadalmi összehasonlítás és társadalmi változás, in Lengyel, Zs. (ed.): *Szociálpszichológia*, Budapest, Osiris, 1997, n.d.

<sup>289</sup> Derrida, J.: A struktúra, a jel és a játék az embertudományok diszkurzusában, *Helikon*. Vol. 40, No. 1-2, 1994, 34.

<sup>290</sup> Jerrold–Tillotson, quoted by Showalter, E.: Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness, *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 8, No. 2, Writing and Sexual Difference, Winter, 1981, 188.

power is held by women in the family, while being in the hands of men in society due to “creation” (as they were the sole proprietors of science, literature, music, etc. until recent times). As a result – just as Subject no. 17, having a background in social sciences, suggested –, if women step forward as creators in society, public opinion holds that the terrain of men might ebb, especially if they are equally participating in childcare and domestic tasks. Also, they have expressis verbis referred to the already present phenomenon of so-called “norm violation”<sup>291</sup> in modern society:

*History is irreversible. Young adults (both men and women over 20) find this old, traditional division an object of ridicule. It can be obstructed, even on a political level, but the main direction will remain unchanged. (Subject no. 17, social sciences)*

We need to treat the above analogy carefully however. Showalter finds it “dangerous to place the body at the center of a search for female identity [...] The study of biological imagery in women’s writing is useful and important as long as we understand that factors other than anatomy are involved in it.”<sup>292</sup> Besides, if we were to found our arguments on this, and we would accentuate the main role (first role, privilege) of women in society referring to their biological differentness, we would essentially further reinforce the mechanism maintaining the status quo, which has virtually created the hierarchical, deterministically considered division of gender, based on said biological differences. This means we would result in the same, albeit from the opposite direction.

## CONCLUSIONS

My qualitative analysis – which has inter alia examined female scholars with regards to their identification with female identity – shows that a part of them – especially those I have classified into the 4th group (those favouring “classical equality”) – finds the appearance of the “particular ontological viewpoint of women”<sup>293</sup> in science necessary or important, because they consider themselves as being primarily present on the forums as representatives of their scientific field and themselves. This attitude can nonetheless lead to the reinforcement of existing norms and binary oppositions. Another part of the interviewees, however, expressed a much stronger identification with the cluster of women, they thus intend to advance the growth of female numbers among the DScs of the MTA as well as the academicians in some shape or form (though not always with positive discrimination necessarily).

<sup>291</sup> Neményi: *Szülői feladatok*, 244.

<sup>292</sup> Showalter, E.: *Feminist Criticism*, 189.

<sup>293</sup> Cf. Harding: *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?*

Most of the subjects were grouped into the “progressive identifier” type, the second largest group was that of “essentialist identifiers”, as well as the “dual attachment” type, each group counting the same number of female scholars. The “classical equality” type was the second to last, followed by the “alternative” type having the fewest representatives. The categories did not show any significant difference in terms of age, though there were notable disparities with regards to the scientific fields: while the members of the “classical equality” group were almost exclusively scholars in natural sciences, the “essentialist identifiers” group consisted mostly of women from social studies or the humanities.

By summarising the results, we can conclude that the “dual identifiers” and “progressive identifiers” (they were the most numerous groups) find the issue regarding the proportion of female academicians imperative, and that they have also started the attempts to reshape the previously closed, “masculine” system. Members of the 2nd group (the “essentialist identifiers”) find the question of academicians less important, while members of the 4th group (“classical equality”) do not find it important at all; neither group has ever addressed the issue of the proportion of women. The 5th (“alternative”) group has a neutral attitude toward the topic. The female academicians and the DScs are in complete disagreement regarding the woman quota and positive discrimination, except for a select few members of the 3rd (“progressive identifiers”) group. We can therefore conclude that the stance of female scholars differs vastly with regards to the issue of academicians, but it does primarily correlate with the female identity.

We can also observe the parameter touched on in previous surveys to be true, namely that a strong identification with feminists has not excluded the sense of womanhood (see the “progressive identifiers” group), and that a strong identification with women has not automatically enhanced politicised attitudes (see “dual attachment” and “essentialist identifiers”). It also has become apparent that a critical attitude towards gender stereotypes was present among those who found the issue of gender at the Academy to be important, which could also be interpreted as identification with feminists.

GIM<sup>294</sup> has also allowed to show clearly how gender stereotypes appear in the groups studied, as well as how these are accepted by the female scholars. This means – as Becker and Wagner have stated – that there is a clear relation between gender role preferences and the existing “sexist myths”.<sup>295</sup> We could observe that those who have a strong identification with femininity (“dual attachment” and “essentialist identifier” groups) are typically more prone to consider themselves in a stereotypical manner as well (partially reinforcing

<sup>294</sup> Becker–Wagner: *Doing Gender Differently*.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibidem*, 490.

the traditional stereotypes), and they consider themselves to be bearers of assumed female traits (from statements like: “we women tend to be more...”, “women don’t want that (to be leaders)”, “Women are not fit to lead...”, etc.). Gender stereotypes were denied by the 4th group (“classical equality”) the most, and – interestingly – the members of the “alternative” grouping do not identify the majority of known stereotypes as gender-specific. The recognition of these latter can already be seen in society, and can be explained by the phenomenon of norm violations, which tends to be more and more natural. (See above, Subject no. 17: “The young adults [...] find this old, traditional division as an object of ridicule”.)

The analysis has also allowed us to conclude that the interviewees find gender identity and subjective value judgement to be a less important aspect in the field of natural and technical sciences. Objectivity in a given field pushes the subject as a person – and thereby the issue of gender – into the background. This is why female scholars tend to accept the existing set of rules created by men more in these areas, and do not intend to change them, nor introduce the specific female identity or point of view onto the playing field. Their assimilation supports the status quo from a certain perspective, meaning they paradoxically maintain gender stereotypes by entering a male-dominated field.

The phrase ‘female scholar’ had long been considered an oxymoron, the characteristics and roles defined and limited by gender were always arbitrarily attached to men and women. This is why the lack of footing in the academic field, the lack or fragmented nature of reinforcing norms – which has a determining presence to this day – has made the scientific self-articulation of women problematic in general. It is, however, apparent that the reasons behind the phenomenon have to be investigated from further aspects in order to get a clearer picture. The sample, on the other hand, showed that differences mainly originate from how and to what extent female scholars can identify with women as a social cluster (gender identity). This question revealed differences in spite of the similar background and level of education – which in many aspects is not dissimilar to what can be considered generally true for women in the society.

# GENDER HISTORY RETROSPECTIVE IN HUNGARY AFTER 1949

Spaces and opportunities after the Declaration of Gender Equality and  
the shadow of the ideology of the Party



## INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I am attempting a comprehensive introduction of how historical changes in the second part of the 20th century have affected women's and science policies, the educational, employment as well as family support system in Hungary, i.e. how the contradictory ideological and practical conditions of the world emerged as a result of the interrupted process of civilisation (the interrupted development of the middle class), and how these affected the structure of social roles.

I would like to remind readers that this chapter is also part of a qualitative research project executed in 2017 and 2018, within the scope of which I recorded semi-structured interviews with 11 female academics and 21 female doctors of science (DSc). As I have mentioned in the former chapters, I was primarily aiming to find out if they had encountered any disadvantages that can be traced back to their gender during their scientific career, and whether the fact that women are extremely underrepresented to this day in the upper echelons of Hungarian science can be attributed to gender discrimination (the percentage of women among academics and DScs in the Hungarian Academy of Sciences [Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, referred to henceforth as MTA] is 6.7% academics and 15.5% DSc, respectively). As I have already mentioned, the member election in 2019 changed the ratio of the female academics to 8.7% and in 2022 to 10.4%.<sup>296</sup>

Since the members of the analysed population were mainly born between 1940 and 1960, and typically gained their first academic degrees in the '60s, '70s and '80s, the domestic historical context of the research was state socialism. Though the multi-perspective survey has shown general hindrances rooted in gender differences, especially in leadership roles and with regards to the election process of the Academy, it became clear nonetheless that the interviewed scientists have fundamentally encountered difficulties related rather to the typical political-ideological frame of the second part of the 20th century than those based on gender during the offset of their scientific career.

<sup>296</sup> Cf. Lamm–Nagy: 2019 ismét a „nők éve”, 1653.

By quoting certain parts of the interviews, I intend to demonstrate the exact traditional as well as brand-new issues female scientists have or could have faced during the era of state socialism.

The fact that state socialism brought profound changes and fundamentally transformed the previous social structure is commonly known. Furthermore, all this was joined with significant changes in worldview and reasoning. The most expressive way to illustrate how impactful the characteristics in mentality introduced in this era were is to point to certain mental conditionings which people could not shed even after the end of socialism.<sup>297</sup> The results of in-depth interview research done by Mária Neményi show, for example, that the majority of people socialised during the decades of state socialism could not clearly separate the role of the state and the employer even in the 2000s. Thus, they have attributed certain benefits, such as GYED [child care fee], company nursery or kindergarten, etc. even after 2000 to the state.<sup>298</sup> The same heritage can also be observed with regards to their relationship toward the public sphere and politics.

Inspecting the participation in politics in Hungary during the turn of the millennium as well as the characteristics of domestic political activity, certain researchers have found that paternalism, the need for a nanny state, still has a heavy presence as a heritage of the Kádár-era of sorts. Moreover, the lack of interest towards public matters, social atomisation and the lack of “civil courage” is also present to this day.<sup>299</sup> All this ingrainedness could remain so apparent and persistent because the ideological and political set of requirements and conditions existed from 1948 until 1989, and it only changed, during all this time, insofar as the totalitarian model adopted a trait in the mid-60s which we could call “weakening authoritarian”.<sup>300</sup>

#### RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES, TOLERATIONS AND BANS IN THE SHADOW OF STATE IDEOLOGY

The equal political and civil rights of men and women have been codified as fundamental rights and embedded into the Constitution in our country after World War II (Hungarian Constitution, Act XX of 1949), furthermore, the right of women to education, free choice of career and occupation has also

<sup>297</sup> Valuch, T.: *Magyar hétköznapok. Fejezetek a mindennapi élet történetéből a második világháborútól az ezredfordulóig*, Budapest, Napvilág, 2013, 7.

<sup>298</sup> Neményi, M.: Család és családpolitika, *Szociológiai Szemle* 2003, 1, 26.

<sup>299</sup> Valuch, T.: „Ne szólj szám...” A politikai részvétel és a politikai aktivitás néhány sajátossága az ezredforduló Magyarországon, *Metszetek. Társadalomtudományi Folyóirat*, Vol. 2, No. 2–3, 2013, 153.

<sup>300</sup> Valuch, T.: A magyar művelődés 1948 után, in Kósa, L. (ed.): *Magyar művelődéstörténet*, Budapest, Osiris, 1998, 461.

been stated. Article 1 paragraph 66 posits complete legal equality between men and women, i.e. rejects any negative gender discrimination extended to all facets of life: “The Republic of Hungary shall ensure the equality of men and women in all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.”<sup>301</sup> Thus it established and provided a unified framework for all those new elements in legal regulation, which led to the equality of women in Hungary from a legal point of view. The Family Act of 1952 (Act IV of 1952) created legal equality with respect to the role of women in the family, which presented a fundamentally new approach in family relations. “Socialist marriage is a fellowship built upon the affection between two free and equal people.”<sup>302</sup> Moreover, the above legal act declared the equal rights and responsibilities regarding family matters, codified the freedom in the choice of names, stressed the joint estate, defined the rights pertaining to divorce, and detailed the equal rights regarding child custody and the right of shared parenting. We cannot forget however that the primary goal of the above was to achieve complete control over the family as a legal institution. In any case, by providing the right for women to initiate divorce, the state actually made the resolution of family bonds easier.<sup>303</sup>

We need to add that simultaneously to providing these rights, the Ministry of the Interior issued regulations that resulted in the abolishing of any possibility of civil organisations. As the result of this, the Hungarian Feminist Association, existing since 1904, as well as numerous other organisations (civil reading circles and clubs, organisations independent of the state party, charity women’s associations, etc.) could not be active until the regime change.<sup>304</sup> The MNDSZ [Magyar Nők Demokratikus Szövetsége, Hungarian Women’s Democratic Alliance] active until 1956, as well as the MNOT [Magyar Nők Országos Tanácsa, National Council of Hungarian Women] reorganised in 1957 and active until 1989 were not independent of the one-party state, as they exclusively represented the state ideology.

One of the consequences was that the diverse western waves of feminism, as well as the ideologies stated therein, could not be introduced in Hungary, and emblematic writings could not get into the hands of Hungarian readers after 1945. Not to mention that these works were not even available in their original languages.

<sup>301</sup> 1949. évi XX. törvény – A Magyar Népköztársaság Alkotmánya, <http://www.rev.hu/sulinet45/szerviz/dokument/1949.evi3.htm> (accessed 2 May 2020).

<sup>302</sup> Schadt, M.: „A feltörekvő dolgozó nő” – *Nők az ötvenes években*, Pécs, Pannónia Könyvek, 2003, 18.

<sup>303</sup> Cf. *ibidem*.

<sup>304</sup> Acsódy, J.: Államszocializmus – nők – ellenzékiesség, *Társadalmi Nemek Tudománya Interdiszciplináris eFolyóirat*, 8(1), 2018, 1–15, <https://ojs.bibl.u-szeged.hu/index.php/tntef/article/view/33836/32908> (accessed 21 May 2022).

The media and the publishing industry was under the strict control of state censorship, feminism and its history was approached in the public sphere by creating confusion and incomprehension.<sup>305</sup> Thus, presenting the history of feminism and feminist notions to the Hungarian public was practically barred in the era of state socialism. In addition to this, the approach of “promoting, tolerating, banning (*tiltás, tűrés, támogatás*)”<sup>306</sup> (known as the “three T’s” or PTB) in cultural policies became a typical trait of the state. The set of authors and works declared to be “tolerated” by the censorship grew at a very slow pace.<sup>307</sup>

*In Hungary back then, if one wanted to read a textbook in a foreign language, it could not be done too simply, they were difficult to get. We did not have much choice. This presented a barrier for me multiple times, especially due to my research subject. (Subject no. 18, social sciences)*

Breaking the civil society was needed in the interest of securing the power of the one-party state. One of the tools applied for this purpose was the atomisation and proletarianisation of the populace.<sup>308</sup> Women (as well as men) needed to take significant political-ideological disadvantages into account within the relations of that era in Hungary as well. The dictatorial establishment created a particular “subjected” relation with regards to the relation of politics and society, which was also joined by a certain sense of defeat after the revolution of 1956. Society thus became even more exposed to political power, and it had an even bigger effect on the attitude of different social groups as well as on the intellectuals.<sup>309</sup>

*“Are you a party member?” – was the question at the university. I responded with no, I am not. Why, they ask. “We need people with commitment here, you know.” (Subject no. 32, natural sciences)*

*Only people with good political standing could go to conferences or labs abroad back then, this was an issue for me multiple times, it hindered my getting on. Not everyone liked it if their inferiors used their brain or had different opinions. (Subject no. 15, natural sciences)*

<sup>305</sup> Ibidem, 6.

<sup>306</sup> The words are in different (actually reverse) order here: in Hungarian *promoting* is *támogatás*, *tolerating* is *tűrés*, while *banning* is *tiltás*.

<sup>307</sup> Valuch: *A magyar művelődés*, 461.

<sup>308</sup> Cf. Asztalos-Morell, I.: A mérnöknő: Felszabadított nő vagy pártretorikai fegyelmezőeszköz a személyi kultusz Magyarországnán, *Társadalmi Nemek Tudománya Interdiszciplináris eFolyóirat* 2018, 2(8), 147, [http://epa.oszk.hu/03400/03462/00017/pdf/EPA03462\\_tarsadalmi\\_2018\\_02\\_140-173.pdf](http://epa.oszk.hu/03400/03462/00017/pdf/EPA03462_tarsadalmi_2018_02_140-173.pdf) (accessed 6 July 2020).

<sup>309</sup> Cf. Valuch: *A magyar művelődés*.

This meant that views different from those of the party could not be articulated on any forums neither during the Rákosi dictatorship, nor beyond that, during the Kádarian consolidation period. There were thus no grassroots initiatives. No voices addressing women's policies, or addressing criticism against the regime could develop in our country. If opposition circles, alternative thinkers, entered the public sphere regardless during these tense political periods, they were faced with ramifications. During the so-called Philosopher's Trial of 1973, several people were removed from their academic positions, after which the control of the state party manifested to an even harsher degree. Multiple philosophers were arrested for possession of "anti-establishment" manuscripts.<sup>310</sup> Similar ideology-based layoffs were, however, common not only in the '60s and '70s, but in the later periods too, up until the end of socialism.

*I was removed from ELTE [Eötvös Loránd University] in '85, the police visited the head of our department and the dean way too many times. They then decided not to extend my contract as an assistant lecturer. (Subject no. 20, liberal arts)*

This virtually meant that an intellectual in Hungary had to completely renounce their right to freedom of thought and expression in the scientific field. Thus, up until the late '80s, keeping distance from politics, indifference, a low level of civic self-consciousness and a negligible extent of empowerment was typical.<sup>311</sup> This also meant that the fundamental rights – as well as the emancipation of women – declared in the Constitution during four decades of state socialism remained de facto completely under the shadow of party ideology.

#### CHANGES IN THE SITUATION OF WOMEN, OLD AND NEW BARRIERS OF SUCCESS

The social status of women changed profoundly in three areas during the era of state socialism, due to the significant shifts in working, power structure and education. Despite the fact, however, that the realisation of women's emancipation was part of public awareness on the turn of the '40s and '50s, and that the situation regarding women's education was beginning to look favourable, all these changes came with large internal disparities and problems.<sup>312</sup> This was because the fundamental background of all these changes was – beside ideological perspectives – the drastic change of economic factors. The inclusion

<sup>310</sup> See Acsády: *Megtettük-e azt...*, 184–185.

<sup>311</sup> Cf. Valuch: *A magyar művelődés*; Valuch: „Ne szólj szám...”, 146–156.

<sup>312</sup> Ferge, Zs.: *Változik-e manapság a nők helyzete Magyarországon?*, *Létünk*, 1982, 5, 883–907.

of women in the labour market was one of the consequences of the aggressive, extensive industrial production which was to be implemented following the Soviet model of the planned economy.<sup>313</sup> In other words, the democratisation of the educational system could virtually be implemented only because it was defined as one of the instruments of modern workforce training.

Managing the educational institutions' system, tutoring – including the tutoring of women – in Hungary was also subordinated to economic rationalism. The idea of the newly created “ideal woman”, following a Soviet model, as well as the interests of women during the Rákosi dictatorship, both served the purposes of the official ideology and the party bureaucracy. The limits of emancipation therefore only extended to where they could still serve the socialist ideology.<sup>314</sup> The most important ideological thesis stated that state socialism has to surpass capitalism with its own ability for development.<sup>315</sup> Training the youth to accept the ideology of this state socialist system was primarily in the centre of reshaping education. This of course entailed the fundamental need of this new political system to produce a technocratic elite loyal to the communist party.

It is commonly known that the social culture of Hungary before World War II. was mainly closed, with social mobility limited. The so-called “*numerus clausus*”, i.e. Act XXV of 1920 controlling the enrolment into higher education was also introduced in the same period, which limited the proportion of Jews to be enrolled in universities, the polytechnic, economic and law schools. This resulted in an increased chance for urban bourgeois, gentry and other so-called “Christian genteel middle-class” groups to achieve higher education and start a white-collar career.<sup>316</sup> We need to add that the concept of gentility was also in transition at that point in time.

As Kövér and Gyáni highlighted, gentility could not be achieved simply on the grounds of birthright or profession at that time. A strict principle of selection was in effect, which was not completely expressed by the system of titles and estates. More precisely, the concept of gentility was autonomically dictated by the practice of social interactions by reserving the status of “gentleman” to those belonging to the society either formally or – and especially – informally. These “gentlemen” could reach all statuses through these non-market routes. Jews had to secure such a position for themselves through market achievements, if they received sufficient acknowledgment at all.<sup>317</sup>

<sup>313</sup> Schadt, M.: Ellentmondásos szerepelvárások, nők az államszocializmusban, *Acta Sociologica*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2005, 62.

<sup>314</sup> Schadt: „*A feltörekvő dolgozó nő*”, 13.

<sup>315</sup> Cf. Asztalos-Morell: *A mérnökő*, 146.

<sup>316</sup> Faragó: *Nők a tudományban*, 27.

<sup>317</sup> Kövér, G. – Gyáni, G.: *Magyarország társadalomtörténete a reformkortól a második világháborúig*, Budapest, Osiris, 2006, 271.

This social and educational system was profoundly transformed by the communist, state socialist system after 1945. First, the materialistic system governing enrolment was substituted by the “cadre approach”, and second, the most competent candidates were selected from the working class and poor peasants for various vocational and rapid training courses and to fulfil the role of the new white-collar class.<sup>318</sup> The class composition and political loyalty was controlled by those entering traditional higher education as well. The aim of this control was to secure the training of intellectuals loyal to the party in these educational avenues. Places were reserved in universities for those deemed politically appropriate due to either descent or their membership in the party. An intellectual descent was therefore unfavourable in terms of a person’s eligibility for further education due to political-ideological reasons.

*I started with a disadvantage due to my white-collar heritage. When two students achieved the same score on the matriculation, the one enrolling was the “m-kind”, the offspring of a working class family, not the white-collar child. (Subject no. 24, social sciences)*

Students from middle class families could only get into higher education institutions if they had a flawless scholastic record, to the places left open by the aforementioned.<sup>319</sup> The result of this, however, opened up opportunities for higher education to the lower strata of society as well as to women. This forced mobility has fundamentally changed the status of social classes, but it was quite often joined by senseless sacrifices.<sup>320</sup>

*I can only enter university with this white-collar background, if I apply for physical labour before, they said to me back then. My uncle mentioned a factory near us, saying I might apply for a job there. So I was there for a year as a physical worker, I had to work on small radio parts, before I could continue my education. (Subject no. 15, natural sciences)*

Certain interviewees of mine reported not being accepted to the university of their choice because the political leadership at the time considered them an enemy of the establishment due to their family or heritage.

*I was among those least acceptable politically because of my father and my family. So this is what caused issues, not the fact that I am a woman. I always reached the maximum scores, but as I said, I was not politically suitable. On top of that, my*

<sup>318</sup> Faragó: *Nők a tudományban*, 27.

<sup>319</sup> Asztalos-Morell: *A mérnökknő*, 147–148.

<sup>320</sup> Cf. Valuch: *A magyar művelődés*.

*father [...] could not be put in jail in 1956, but he needed to move to a different city.*  
(Subject no. 15, natural sciences)

*So the issue was again not that the fact I am of a different gender. It would have meant nothing at all [...] it was all political.* (Subject no. 1, social sciences)

*There were heaps of quality folks with a degree among my forebears, and children of such had great difficulties getting into a university at the turn of the 50s.* (Subject no. 10, doctor of technical sciences)

*I was not a member of KISZ [Magyar Kommunista Ifjúsági Szövetség, Hungarian Young Communist League]. Those intending to continue their studies were 120% KISZ-members in high school. Whoever wasn't could not even be recommended for university by the high school. And I had not become a member due to the Imre Nagy trial and because my dad was thrown in the clink. When I explained I was not a member of the League due to reasons of conscience, they considered me a clericist, because who else could have a conscience other than the religious. So they introduced me to other teachers as a reactionary clericist someone. But I took part in all sorts of academic competitions so I could apply eventually.* (Subject no. 25, social sciences)

#### EQUAL RIGHTS IN STATISTICS, AND WHAT LAY BEHIND IT

The reformation of education practically meant making primary education mandatory, followed by changing secondary education. The most important result of the former was the disappearance of the gender-differentiated education typical for the interwar period in Hungary. Decree 6660/1995 of 1945 allowed for women to further their education in law school, whereas Act XII of 1946 allowed for equal conditions for female and male applicants to enrol to universities and colleges. As a consequence, the percentage of women rose from 19.5% to 41.4% in middle schools in the 1951–52 school year, rising further to 52% by 1959.<sup>321</sup> There were significant changes in higher education as well: “the percentage of female doctors as well as lawyers and attorneys rose from 12.4% and 0% in 1949 to 21.5% and 9.2% in 1960, respectively.”<sup>322</sup>

By the beginning of 1978, the educational level of working women under 35 was higher than that of men in the same age group. The proportion of women with graduations was 22% in 1962, which grew to 40% by 1972, and up to 45%

<sup>321</sup> See in Schadt: „A feltörekvő dolgozó nő”, 34–36.

<sup>322</sup> Data from the Hungarian Statistical Office called KSH (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal) Adatgyűjtemény, quoted by Schadt: „A feltörekvő dolgozó nő”, 52.

in 1978.<sup>323</sup> The proportion of women among researchers rose to 22% by 1970–71, growing to 26% in 1975. The number of female researchers rose further during the '80s, their proportion reaching 27%, 11% among professors and 16% among research unit leaders.<sup>324</sup> Beside gender distribution and the increased number of women, the composition of white-collar society has significantly changed after 1945. It is the prestige of specialist intellectuals that rose primarily, thus increasing the recognition of technical and economic careers.

It can, however, be pointed out that the proportion of men in the new political system and restructured white-collar field was still significantly higher in the university departments enjoying higher prestige (such as the technical, economic or law faculties), while the number of women was only higher in places of lesser prestige value.<sup>325</sup> So ultimately, even though their number had risen to a huge extent in higher education, this did not result in a reduction of the present disadvantage of women in the socio-economic field.

The situation shifted by the '70s insofar as the gender proportion became somewhat balanced in economic, arts, law, medical faculties and departments of the natural sciences. This still did not change the general rule that the technical careers belonged to men, with pedagogy belonging to women.<sup>326</sup>

In the business world – similar to what can be experienced in the scientific value hierarchy – gender segregation was still apparent. Though it may have seemed, based on the economic activity of women, that the objective of state socialism with regards to equal opportunities had been fulfilled, the gender disparity had been reproduced in practice.

In her book *Feltörekvő dolgozó nő* [The emerging working woman], Mária Schadt pointed out that women's ideals created by propaganda (Stakhanovite women, etc.) may have increased the number of working women, but they primarily succeeded in feminising those workplaces offering bad wages.<sup>327</sup>

*There is one more interesting thing. If you look at certain positions, like that of an assistant dean for education, meaning when there is work to do, where the burden is significant, women are immediately found, but if it comes to leadership and acknowledgement, higher wages, men come to the limelight at once [...] (Subject no. 9, natural sciences)*

The high influx of women onto the labour market has – similarly to higher education – not come with the reduction of social-gender segregation and stratification.

<sup>323</sup> Ferge: *Változik-e manapság*, 890–893.

<sup>324</sup> Cf. Faragó: *Nők a tudományban*, 27.

<sup>325</sup> M. Schadt, *Ellentmondások...*, 66.

<sup>326</sup> Ferge: *Változik-e manapság*, 888.

<sup>327</sup> Schadt: „*A feltörekvő dolgozó nő*”, 9.

This may have two theoretical reasons. As England sets out, one perspective claims that women are streaming into certain professions in high numbers, pushing down salaries, and that men abandon the profession. The other explanation claims, however, that women can only enter into professions men are conceding to – particularly due to disadvantageous revenue possibilities or diminishing social prestige.<sup>328</sup>

*My superior was a man of course, but he had a lower level of education than me, I already had my doctorate by then. I was sent a letter from the United States offering the opportunity to take part in a conference. I never received that letter and ultimately he (my superior) went in my stead. I know this because I received an invitation from the States the next year as well, and the already opened letter addressed to me was brought to my office by a secretary by mistake. So I got wind of it, and of the fact that they had invited me the year before as well. When this came up in discussion at some point in the 90s, my former superior told me “Juli, don’t be mad, it was decreed like this back then, this was automatic, self-evident, who the hell would have thought that all that, the entire system will come to an end anytime”. (Subject no. 15, natural sciences)*

There were absolutely no women among the leaders, cadres of economic-governmental hierarchy in the ’50s.<sup>329</sup> This changed somewhat later on, but the proportion did not become significant among the decision-makers in the state sector or with regards to party leadership and upper tier positions.

Examining the statistics of the time, it becomes clear that the percentage of women among upper and mid-level leaders was 10 to 15% until 1972, after which it grew to 24% in only 5 years. This was, however, depending on the level and the sector. Thus, as Zsuzsa Ferge points out in her analysis, women were still largely underrepresented in leadership or directorial circles, or in the highest positions of party leadership. In other words, their proportion only increased in the lower tiers by the ’70s.<sup>330</sup> Moreover, men managed to get into upper level positions even in professions or organisations where women were overrepresented.

*If you look around in this institute [author’s note: linguistic institute], you can almost exclusively see women, hardly any male researchers. However, the leaders are men, even here. (Subject no. 4, social sciences)*

<sup>328</sup> England quoted by Nagy, B.: *Karrier női módra*, in Lévai, K. – Tóth, I. (eds.): *Szerepváltozások. Jelentés a nők és férfiak helyzetéről*, Budapest, Tárci, 1997, 37.

<sup>329</sup> Schadt: „A feltörekvő dolgozó nő”, 53.

<sup>330</sup> Ferge: *Változik-e manapság*, 892.

Women could only enter the field of politics based on the introduced quota. I need to point out here that the heritage of this forced emancipation is the fact any form of positive discrimination is almost uniformly met with significant revulsion in Hungary due to its state socialist appearance and ideology. Even despite the fact that positive discrimination implemented in the 21st century would particularly contribute to the de facto prevalence of constitutional rights. This means it would provide assistance to equal chances in case of matching qualifications under certain conditions on the basis of equity, in the science sector for example, in case a woman also deals with family matters.

*And what I always say, and said to everyone already, is that I have reached everything 6 to 8 years later in my profession because I am a woman. And not because it posed an issue – it didn't, family is important. But it is a fact. The problem is everything has an age limit in science, which is clearly discriminating against women. (Subject no. 9, natural sciences)*

The great disparity experienced in development, and typical to all sectors, became quite apparent not long after the significant changes starting in the late '40s and '50s, i.e. by the '60s, which was most apparent in salary disparities. The allowances of women were significantly lower than that of men even under the same circumstances. The salaries of women hardly reached 80% of that of their male counterparts in cases of identical educational level, position, etc.<sup>331</sup> The situation on the labour market seemed to reflect the traditional model of task division in the family as well.<sup>332</sup>

*My boss back then, who considered himself a liberal and does so to this very day, told me during a friendly conversation that he is not including me in a project because [...] our colleagues told him that my husband had a good salary. (Subject no. 16, social sciences)*

#### FAMILY POLICY – THE DUAL-EARNER FAMILY MODEL, IDEOLOGY AND REALITY

There was typically no division of household tasks even after the 1950s in Hungary. The surfeit, due to household duties and paid employment of women was therefore a source of constant tension and dispute.<sup>333</sup> The biggest problem

<sup>331</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>332</sup> See also Neményi, M. – Kende, A.: Anyák és lányok, *Replika*, 1999, 35(3), 117–141.

<sup>333</sup> See also Zimmermann, S.: A társadalmi-nemi (gender-) rezsím és küzdelem a magyar államszocializmusban, *TNTEF*, 64–94, <https://ojs.bibl.u-szeged.hu/index.php/tntef/article/view/33698/32770> and Ferge: Változik-e manapság, and Schadt: „A feltörekvő dolgozó nő”.

was the dominance of traditional roles within the family, which resulted in the labour related to household duties to be exclusively the burden of women. Women were therefore drawn onto the labour market en masse propagating emancipation to no avail during state socialism, men were nonetheless almost absolutely dismissive with regards to the division of household tasks and they refused to take their share of childcare duties either.

*I had two children, and my husband was reluctant to help. He was fulfilling a traditional male role. This meant that the children, the shopping, all the household chores, cooking, everything was my responsibility. There was no division of labour at all. He did not provide any support when I needed it the most. True, he did not go against my scientific career, but I received no help. This was typical male behaviour at the time, so it was very, very tough for me. This was of course to the detriment of my sleep, nights were when I could read [...] (Subject no. 16, social sciences)*

*I had to settle the conference presentation, and the household for my husband for while I was travelling, so that everything would be there while I was away. (Subject no. 23, natural sciences)*

*Women needed to do well in the household as well, and this was especially so in my time. All the preparations related to travels, conferences, as well as the domestic tasks were on my shoulder. I recall sitting on the plane in such a tired state that I did not remember a single thing. I fell asleep as soon as I sat down. (Subject no. 23, natural sciences)*

A survey from 1974 with data from sixteen cities of various sizes, as well as a similar survey from 1972 with data collected in villages, pointed out the deeply stereotypical views regarding the most important male and female virtues.<sup>334</sup> This was further reinforced by the study of Mária Neményi and Anna Kende created from 42 in-depth interviews. The interviews were made with members of two different generation groups of women (one born in 1945–1946, one born in 1973–1974). The researchers wanted to find answers with regards to how the historical context of Hungarian post-war society affected the male–female relations in personal life as well as how it affected the contents of the female role. The study found, inter alia, that despite fundamental differences, values originating from different social circumstances, or even vastly different life courses (three distinctly different groups were formed parallel to the different life courses: groups of egalitarians, submissives and independents), the generalisations and stereotypes regarding men and women, as well as explanations justifying gender differences, were very similar. It has

<sup>334</sup> Zimmermann: A társadalmi-nemi (gender-) rezsím, 80.

also been stated that a number of similar experiences presented themselves with regards to the subordinated social role of women in the narratives of both generations.<sup>335</sup>

Finally, as we have seen above, the socialist family model of “two earners – one family income” was rather “one male earner – one female earner moonlighting as an unpaid housekeeper – one family income” in reality.<sup>336</sup> It is true that the Family Act of 1952 made divorces easier, due to women as well as men being allowed to initiate the process. This however only put more strain onto single mothers.

*My husband did not support me that much. I left him after 12 years of marriage, raised two children alone, both were going to primary school back then. But the fact has not meant any leeway in my professional field. So it was very tough. I have a son and a daughter. My daughter used to say “if someone asks who the man in the family is, I usually say it is mostly my mom”. (Subject no. 27, social sciences)*

To summarise, we can state that the most significant failing that women’s policies of the state socialist era had was to draw women into the labour market en masse, while not reconstructing the male–female relation with regards to domestic roles.<sup>337</sup> It is likely that, compared to lower social classes, traditional male–female roles were – and are – present to a lesser extent in the case of white-collar families and an intellectual/scientist husband (homogamy). Moreover, studies related to the topic – e.g. as highlighted by Brines, 1994 – have showed that men take care of even less housekeeping in the families of physical workers, or where the man is financially dependent on his spouse, because in these cases the man intends to stress his “manliness” and the male social role by strongly resisting the household duties.<sup>338</sup> In any case, it is apparent that women could mostly achieve success in their scientific career if they received support from their families, division of household tasks, and equality in some form.

*We had a surrogate grandmother, so we didn’t need to carry the children everywhere. So let me say again that I had no problems originating from this, at least not to my knowledge. And I think I can consider myself incredibly lucky from this point of view, because my husband [...] was a father of whom there are very few. I need to add that I never got up for our babies, it was always him who jumped out of bed and picked*

<sup>335</sup> Cf. Neményi–Kende: Anyák és lányok, 138.

<sup>336</sup> Zimmermann: A társadalmi-nemi (gender-) rezsím, 69, 71, 78.

<sup>337</sup> Acsády: Megtettük-e azt..., 194.

<sup>338</sup> Brines quoted by Neményi, M. – Takács, J.: *Családfenntartó anyák munka–magánélet harmonizációs kísérletei Magyarországon*, in Nagy, B. – Géring, Zs. – Király, G. (eds.): *Dilemmák és stratégiák a család és munka összehangolásában*, Budapest, L’Harmattan, 2018, 358.

*the crying baby up. And we had complete equality in terms of sharing the household burden as well.* (Subject no. 1, social sciences)

*But this was a great win in my life: my peaceful family, and my understanding, loving husband. So I felt no disadvantage in my career for being a woman, and this was incredibly lucky.* (Subject no. 10, technical sciences)

*I once got an invitation to a conference abroad. Our child was very little back then, but both my husband and the child came along, for it could not be left without a mother, and I fed the child in the breaks between conferences. And my husband waited with the child outside, taking care of it while I made my presentation. However, he is a peer, so he knows these conferences are important* (Subject no. 22, natural sciences).

Mária Schadt has also pointed out that the significant influx of women onto the labour market could only have created equal opportunities on a broader scale between men and women if taking care of family and tasks related to the household are institutionalised, and the state takes over certain responsibilities of childcare.<sup>339</sup>

Though the number of places in nurseries and kindergarten increased significantly (tripled) in Hungary between 1950 and 1975, this was not proportional to the extent of women entering the labour market.<sup>340</sup> Not to mention that preschool institutions were quite often inappropriate and of a lesser quality due to the high numbers, and that they could not take over the burden of nurturing from a large number of women due to constant supply issues.

This phenomenon was present until the end of this era, and we needn't forget that the services could be used by government employees in most cases.<sup>341</sup> In other words, "the important institutions of state socialism necessary for women and families (nurseries, kindergarten, schools with daycare option) did indeed take over a part of the burden carried by housewives, all this was not able to create profound changes in the attitude towards domestic roles, however."<sup>342</sup>

The state virtually acquitted itself from developing nurseries with the introduction of GYES (Gyermekgondozási segély, The Social Childcare Fee) in 1967, which practically put all the material and cultural duties of bearing and bringing up a child onto individual women.<sup>343</sup> The institution of GYES was

<sup>339</sup> Schadt: „A feltörekvő dolgozó nő”, 54.

<sup>340</sup> See Aczél, Zs.: Üzemi óvodák 1945 és 1975 között, *Iskolakultúra*, 22(5), 2012, 37–55 and Schadt: „A feltörekvő dolgozó nő”

<sup>341</sup> Aczél: Üzemi óvodák, 39.

<sup>342</sup> Neményi–Takács: Családfenntartó anyák, 358–359.

<sup>343</sup> Cf. Dr. Adamik, M.: A gondoskodás ökonómiája az államszocializmusban. A gyes-diskurzus avagy a szocialista modernizáció válasza a nemek közötti egyenlőség kihívására, in Adamik,

considered to be unmatched in Europe for a long time. Other states in Central or even Western Europe introduced a similar benefit only a decade later.

The introduction of this benefit was mandated by several factors. As it is commonly known, after when the echoes of the so-called *Ratkó-era* (with an abortion ban being in effect between 1953 and 1956) died away, the number of childbirths began to drop drastically in Hungary. Massive concern from the central authority was further increased by the fact that members of the “baby-boom generation” started to be born in this very period in the western countries. Beside demographic reasons, certain labour market concerns can also be assumed to have been behind the introduction of GYES, because it may have appeared as a solution to prevent unemployment if a segment of women could be drawn out of the labour market.<sup>344</sup>

Zsuzsa Ferge states that what became apparent by the 70s could have been suspected before that as well, namely that the significant development in quantity had practically reached its peak in multiple areas.<sup>345</sup> GYES (which was 40% of the average women’s salary) was applied for by 265 thousand women in 1975; this was 11% of women of childbearing age.<sup>346</sup> Following this, a new childcare benefit called GYED was introduced in 1985, which was also tied to the former occupation of women. However, neither brought a complete solution regarding the family situation of women.

#### WOMEN’S IDEAL, FATE OF WOMEN UNDER STATE SOCIALISM

The women’s ideal and the female identity was not completely homogenous during socialism outside of the constant traditional male–female role content, but was permanently being shaped by variables such as class (and in relation to it: the level of education), financial circumstances, but above all, the current official ideology of the state at any given time.

On the basis of the last, Zsuzsa Ferge has divided the changes of approach regarding women into four distinct periods, starting with 1945. The first period (1) was the time between 1945 and 1965, with the ideal being the working woman with an income, the interests of the child were not handled as a priority. The second period (2) engulfed the time after 1965, when it was considered that employment – or more specifically, overdriven work – ought not to hinder the

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M. (ed.): *Bevezetés a szociálpolitika nem szerinti értelmezésébe – „Gendering Social Policy”*, Budapest, ELTE TáTK, 2012, 154, <http://docplayer.hu/28102966-Bevezetes-a-szocialpolitika-nem-szerinti-ertelmezesebe-gendering-social-policy.html> (accessed 15 June 2020).

<sup>344</sup> Makay, Zs.: 50 éve vezették be a gyermekgondozási segílyt (GYES), *Korfa: Népesedési Hírlévéli*, 2017, 17(3), 1–4.

<sup>345</sup> See Ferge: *Változik-e manapság*, 884.

<sup>346</sup> See Makay: *50 éve vezették be*, 2.

motherly role. This meant that the ideal woman in this period was the good mother, and the interests of children were taking primacy as well (the institution of GYES was introduced in this same period). The third period (3) lasted from 1975 to 1980, and it was typically characterised by accommodating work and family, but a definable ideal had not taken shape. Finally, the fourth period (4) was the one after 1980. The pivotal expectation of this era was for society to acknowledge the social importance of family, children, as well as taking care of the sick and elderly. Ferge concludes that the notion of the ideal woman previously containing the attribute of “good mother” was thereby expanded into “the Good Samaritan”, because caretaking and nursing is naturally a female task. This meant that the new woman’s ideal became: “good mother, good wife, good caretaker”. The motif of self-sacrifice became even more accentuated than before, not to mention that the interests of women were almost completely subordinated to the interest of children.<sup>347</sup>

Table 1. Women’s ideal in state socialism

Change of women’s ideals in state socialism	1st period 1945 to 1965	2nd period after 1965	3rd period 1975 to 1980	4th period after 1980
Characteristics	– the ideal is the earner, the working woman	– the motherly role of a woman cannot be hindered by employment or overdriven work	– can fundamentally be typified by the reconciliation of work and family	– society needs to acknowledge taking care of family, children, sick and elderly to be an important social interest – the trait of “the Good Samaritan” got added to being a “good mother”
	– interests of children were not considered to be important	– the ideal woman is a good mother, the interests of children are also pivotal	– no definable women’s ideal has taken shape	– the new ideal became “good mother, good wife, good caretaker”

Own edited resource, 2019

Ferge considered these constant shifts in values to be dangerous from multiple aspects, because she claims that “achieving clearer, unambiguous

<sup>347</sup> Ferge: *Változik-e manapság*, 903.

principles would be more welcome instead of the instability of values or the shift of values spreading currently regarding the women's ideal."<sup>348</sup> She believes that one of the biggest problems with constantly changing ideals is that one of the devices for solving social issues (like unemployment) is "sacrificing women", not only unequivocally, but almost as a knee-jerk action, meaning pushing women into the background as workforce and back into family roles again (as seen with GYES in the '70s). Another of the biggest problems is that if we adjust ourselves to one image of a woman's ideal in any given era, and this ideal then changes based on the nature and magnitude of a social issue, the forced adjustment that follows can be of detriment to those denying themselves by the process, and can cause social harm to those who are not able to adjust themselves to this image.<sup>349</sup>

So if society stresses the domestic role of women in a particular era, considering that to be the ideal ("Like, women need to make the most effort around the house" [Subject no. 10, doctor of technical sciences]; "taking the child to the nursery belongs to the regular tasks of a woman" [Subject no. 23, natural sciences]), a large number of women will find themselves in a dilemma. If they identify with their career and if they intend to have children at the same time, they may experience internal conflicts or psychological dilemmas. If a woman decides to stay at home in such a case, she would contradict herself, but if she chooses the scientific career instead, she might consider herself to be a bad mother. If she decides on both (family and career), she will encounter a disproportionately larger burden, as long as there is no social norm, family policy, or act of law which would include men into the early period of childcare.

*Those who don't have assistance but have a family need to face the challenge of choice, I mean, what do I do now? Who is at the fore? And if there is such, it is a losing situation from then on, because there are no good choices there. Truly, a woman has to decide for family, a mother for her child. But then she abandons her profession.* (Subject no 5, natural sciences)

*I need to add that, as I have lived alone, a conflict like that, I mean who will do the cooking or take care of the child, me or my husband, I never had that in my life, but I have measured it up. This was one hell of a choice for me. But my ambition was to be at least more than a mediocre scholar. So living together, I would not have been able to deal with that. If you like, I have chosen the easier part.* (Subject no. 25, social sciences)

<sup>348</sup> Ibidem, 906.

<sup>349</sup> Ibidem.

As we can see above in the division of Zsuzsa Ferge based on the shifts in view, the official women's ideal in the 4th period, after 1980, culminated in the triad of "good wife", "good mother" and "good caretaker". Moreover, the role of "self-sacrificing woman" appeared much more accentuated than before.

*If I had not learned to work diligently in my younger years, I would indeed be in a tough situation right now.* (Subject no. 10, doctor of technical sciences)

*A woman has to be good in multiple roles. She needs to be a good mother, a good partner, she needs to be feminine, she needs to excel in work. A successful man can allow himself to be a bad husband, a bad father, he will not be judged for it the same as a woman would be. This means disproportionately more strain for women.* (Subject no. 17, social sciences)

In relation to this, Ferge adds that because people are universally diverse, the spectrum of socially accepted and acceptable values and views cannot always lead to a narrow, one-sided notion of an ideal woman. A stable model based on choice and diversity would be needed.<sup>350</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Summarising the above, we can establish that the emancipation efforts of state socialism were doomed to fail in practice, because the ruling approach in families was still conservative, and the role of the male assisting in household tasks became neither natural nor typical.

So, from a female perspective, the period was characterised by the tension between paid labour and unpaid housekeeping duties. Hungarian women had to endure a disproportionately high degree of suffering due to this, as well as significant structural disadvantages, because gender-based work segregation remained typical, with the leadership positions, as well as positions in professions of higher prestige and bigger salaries having mainly been taken by men. Susan Zimmerman asserts that most working women in Hungary experienced paid employment as a possibility of a positive, group-specific identification of sorts nonetheless, because – even if only in a limited manner – it appeared as a prerequisite of a new lifestyle and the possibility of personal, social advancement.<sup>351</sup> At the same time, Schadt pointed out that it was not the need of women for economic independence and a new lifestyle standing behind the dual-earner family model, but more likely the fact that wages were kept low

<sup>350</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>351</sup> Zimmermann: *A társadalmi-nemi (gender-) rezsím*, 87.

during the whole socialist era, and keeping up a certain standard of living required the gainful employment of both partners in most cases.<sup>352</sup>

As opposed to this, the majority of women belonging to the white-collar class and the political elite were, not surprisingly, able to utilise the possibilities originating from paid labour, because they enjoyed certain advantages compared to other women and also because they were able to pass on a part of their caretaking responsibilities to other women. Zimmermann has pointed to this fact by quoting the study *Two Generations' Perceptions of Femininity in Post-Socialist Hungary* (1999) by Anna Kende and Mária Neményi:

White-collar professionals, or experts with a college degree with a career, have on occasion achieved more than their husbands, and women whose families had substantial reserves had the opportunity to delegate housekeeping onto other women. Based on this study, the positive three-part identity of these women – enjoying social privileges due to their employment compared to other women – has at the same time been linked by both the traditional family roles and gender equality.<sup>353</sup>

Finally, we can state that the real problem of discrimination against women could not be solved by the soviet emancipation model. It turned out that, irrespective of the particular social organisation and its ideology – which had a significant impact on social relations and provided opportunities to hundreds of thousands of women in the world outside of their family –, the biggest disadvantages that women had to endure, the traditional social roles based on gender stereotypes and structural disadvantages, remained unchanged. We can assert that as long as women's emancipation exclusively serves the goals of propaganda, and the equality of relationships inside and outside the family is not actually realised, no change will ever take place.

<sup>352</sup> Schadt: „A feltörekvő dolgozó nő”, 128.

<sup>353</sup> Neményi–Kende, quoted by Zimmermann: *A társadalmi-nemi (gender-) rezsím*, 83–84.



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