



Gender equality and quality of life –
how gender equality can contribute
to development in Europe.
A study of Poland and Norway

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Measurement of Gender Equality – Analysing Dimensions, Embracing Areas, Considering Contexts

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Introduction

This working paper discusses how the concept of gender equality has been conceptualised and operationalised in social science research. The paper reviews quantitative research studies concerned with gender equality in order to reflect on diverse ways in which the concept of “gender equality” was defined and consequently measured, what dimensions of gender equality were studied, and what areas and target groups were considered. The underlining scope of the paper is to constitute the basis for the new framework of studying gender equality in the project “Gender equality and quality of life – how gender equality can contribute to development in Europe. A study of Poland and Norway” (GEQ).¹ The aim of the GEQ project is to create a research tool (survey questionnaire) for studying gender equality with regard to the quality of life dimension and social development to be used in Poland, with the potential for broader application in Europe and beyond. Therefore, even if in this paper I consider “gender equality” as a specific concept to be measured, the paper pays special attention to measurement of the concept in relation to quality of life and health.

This paper first discusses two characteristics of the concept which are important to consider in quantitative measurement: its complexity and its contested character. Secondly, it looks at how the concept is operationalised and discusses the analytical dimensions that have been studied within diverse research projects, such as gender equality orientation, gender-equal practices and power within relations. Thirdly, the paper looks at the areas that are of less interest to researchers and suggests exploring further the areas that are to be examined. Finally, it discusses gender equality as a condition and how to measure this dimension. The paper closes with recommendations for the theoretical framework aiming at studying gender equality within the GEQ project.

¹ The project is realised by the Institute of Sociology at the Jagiellonian University of Krakow in cooperation with the Institute for Gender Research (STK) at the University of Oslo, the Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine Chair at Jagiellonian University Medical College and the Institute of Health and Society (Helsam) at the University of Oslo. The project is financed by the Polish-Norwegian Research Programme.

Gender equality as a concept – complexity and contestability

Gender equality (GE) has been one of the most complex and contested concepts in recent decades in Europe and worldwide (Verloo, 2007). These two aspects – complexity and contestability – cause the difficulty in measurement of gender equality.

The first challenge mentioned, the complexity of the concept, lies in its multidimensional character. On the one hand, gender equality can be studied within different analytical dimensions, such as rights, attitudes and practices, resources distribution, or capabilities (Holter et al., 2009; Neyer, Lappegård, & Vignoli, 2013) (see Table 1). Indicators of gender equality will therefore differ depending on how the concept is defined and operationalised. On the other hand, the concept operates in the multiple settings of life of an individual, such as work, family life, political participation, health, decision making, violence, free time, unpaid work and others. These diverse areas are considered when designing gender equality indexes (see Łapniewska, 2014). The constellation of analytical dimensions and areas of life creates a complex matrix within which gender equality experiences are situated and lived by individuals – individuals might have different experiences when it comes to gender equality depending on the area and the researched dimension. Moreover, gender equality also operates within different relationships (with parents, partners, children, employers etc.). Capturing these diverse experiences of gender equality is important to analyse the impact they have on quality of life or health.

Table 1. Conceptualising gender equality in research – selected examples

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gender equality as equal rights of men and women• Gender equality as gender-equal practices in unpaid work and care• Gender equality as shared decision making between partners• Gender equality as equal power in a relationship• Gender equality orientation – a pro-gender-equality attitude• Gender equality as having similar capacities to act• Gender equality as lack of discrimination

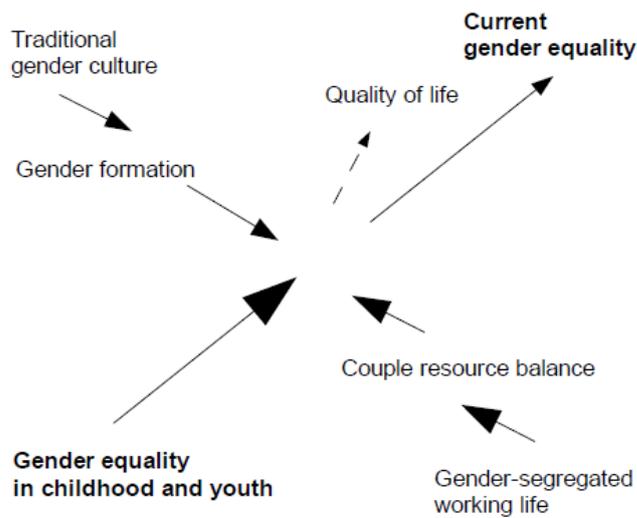
For example, in the Swedish research on linkages between gender equality in couples and women's and men's health, the authors differentiated between equality in the private and public sphere, hypothesising that these would have diverse effects on women's and men's health (Månsdotter, Lindholm, Lundberg, Winkvist, & Ohman, 2006). The authors measured gender equality in the public sphere using two indicators such as income and

occupational position, and GE in the private sphere with parental leave allowances and temporary child care benefit. The results show differing effects of gender equality in the private and public spheres:

Traditional women in the public sphere run lower risks of death and sickness than equal women, while traditional men in the public sphere tend to have higher risks than equal men. This points at support for the convergence hypothesis regarding mortality by means of, for instance, equal women entering health damaging behaviours traditionally linked to men. The sickness findings point at support for the stress hypotheses, for instance as we found that among equal couples in income (n=13 522) only 0.6% were at once classified equal in both domestic indicators, and that among equal couples in occupational position (n=17 548) only 0.5% were entirely equal in the domestic sphere. That is, equal women in public may not yet have been released from, and equal men not yet stressed by, double work. (Månsdotter, Lindholm, Lundberg, Winkvist, & Ohman, 2006, p. 619)

As shown in the example quoted above, a combination of aspects needs to be considered when studying gender equality (Holter et al., 2009; Kawachi, Kennedy, Gupta, & Prothrow-Stith, 1999; Elwer, 2013). In the Norwegian study which was an inspiration for the project, gender equality was conceptualised as multidimensional and the framework used included five dimensions of gender equality (Holter et al., 2009). These dimensions were as follows: gender-equal attitudes, gender-equal practices, resource distribution in co-habiting/couple (hetero) relationships, gender formation and gender equality in childhood and youth. All these dimensions were used in the analytical model of the study, as possibly impacting the quality of life (see Figure 1). While highlighting the multidimensional character of the concept the study did not come up with the overall concept of gender equality (nonetheless with the quantitative index).

Figure 1. Initial model of the survey (Holter, Svare, & Egeland, 2009, p. 9)



The second challenge that appears critical when studying gender equality is the contested nature of the concept. The concept of gender equality is contested at both a political level (as a political and strategic aim) and an individual level (e.g. as a uniform norm). On the political level, there are differing visions of what gender equality should be and debates on the need for introducing gender equality policies (Verloo, 2007; Kowalska, Migalska, & Warat, 2014). Besides general agreement on the benefits of gender equality, the European Commission's latest report noticed that the progress towards gender equality is being achieved at an uneven pace, which would suggest that gender equality as an element of the political agenda receives diversified attention among the countries (European Commission, 2014). For example, the study on barriers to implementing equality policy in Poland indicated among others such obstacles as a lack of political will to implement equality policies, lack of interest in recommendations concerning equality policies, the "ideological" image of equality policies or introducing "façade" activities, and not allowing meritocratic debate for actual change (Pawluś & Łukasiewicz, 2011).

As Meike Verloo underlines, the contestability of the concept is being somewhat hidden under a rather homogenised policy approach to gender equality:

Gender equality (...) contested character is obscured partly by its frequent appearance as a harmonious and a-conflictual concept, either due to a tendency to homogenize diversity under a dominant norm (for instance, that of the European Union) or due to an explicit "strategic framing" of the concept to make it enter more easily into the policy agenda as a common and accepted goal (Verloo 2007: 22).

The arrival of gender equality as a theme on the political agenda of international institutions, such as the EU or UN, was one of the factors for which the measurement of the concept at the macro level also became homogenised – the main rationale for this was index comparability across countries that was supposed to measure the progress in policy implementation. The wide usage of statistics and the popularisation of internet access to international databases has supported this development – many databases of the OECD, World Bank and UN have been opened to the public with new indices and variables (see Łapniewska, 2014). This development has caused the themes of gender equality to be narrowed to the ones being defined by political agendas, as well as meaning that the measurement of gender equality is mostly done at the macro level (at the level of the country), with little attention to the individual experiences of gender equality. There is a need to go further than the macro-level indicators commonly used by international institutions monitoring gender equality. Research on gender equality should look for individual-level indicators based on experiences of equality in the people's lives, not on statistical variables that describe population (compare Robeyns, 2003). This direction would indicate that research should focus more on gender equality as a process, as a concept actively negotiated and created within relationships in families, work and the public sphere.

While striving to discover more individual-level indicators of gender equality, the research needs to take into account the fact that gender equality may also be contested as an aim at the individual level. As a CBOS survey shows, people in Poland are almost all in favour of equal treatment of women and men, but their opinions of whether existing laws assure gender equality are very differentiated (CBOS, 2013b). The varied evaluation of gender equality progress in Poland possibly depends on differing perceptions of what constitutes "gender equality" – people might have a different understanding of what gender equality actually means for them and how it is experienced or interpreted (Sörlin, Lindholm, Ng, & Ohman, 2011). The popular understanding is that "gender equality" is linked to the notion of "equal", meaning the same or more or less the same amount or conditions for both genders. In their measurements, social researchers also often assume that "equal" means the same, e.g. equal hours spent on household tasks are interpreted as existence of gender equality in division of housework, but this notion of sameness as equality has been questioned in research (Neyer, Lappegård, & Vignoli, 2013; Sörlin, Lindholm, Ng, & Ohman, 2011). A subjective perception of inequality might be more important for individuals than

objectively evaluated equality. The discrepancy between “objective” and “subjective” gender equality was shown in the study of Sörlin et al. (2011). “Objective” gender equality was calculated by researchers and had to match external criteria. Self-reported (objective) gender equality was measured for three domains, such as (1) education, income, and full or part-time employment; (2) sharing of time and responsibilities for household work; and (3) sharing of parental leave following the birth of a child as well as sharing of temporary parental leave for child sickness. Subjective gender equality, measured by the simple question “How do you rate the gender equality in your relationship?”, indicated a subjective evaluation of gender equality. The authors concluded that there was little agreement between subjective and objective gender equality, which shows that people may understand gender equality differently than it is operationalised by researchers.

Some authors (Neyer et al., 2013a; Nordenmark & Nyman, 2003) stress that the concepts of gender equality used need to capture the notions of fairness and justice, as perceived by women and men. The feeling of gender inequality is strongly linked with the feeling of unfairness (Nordenmark & Nyman, 2003). For example, in a study on the impact of gender equality on fertility, the authors stressed that “only if gender differences are perceived as gender inequalities may we expect depressing effects on fertility” (Neyer et al., 2013). As Hammarström et al. (2014) note, gender equality as a concept has since its origins been questioned for not taking into account gender differences which are not necessarily unfair.

Another issue that is important to stress when preparing a survey on gender equality is the fact that for many respondents “gender equality” might be an abstract concept with little relation to their lives – this was noticed even in Sweden, a country where gender equality is much more present in public debate (Nordenmark & Nyman, 2003). This shows that if we ask people if they are satisfied with gender equality, they might evaluate different experiences and different dimensions of the concept, or even not link it with their experiences.

In summary, the gender equality framework needs to reflect the multidimensional character of gender equality, as well as the contestability of this concept. Possibly, research should look at individual notions or definitions of gender equality (compare e.g. Doull, Oliffe, Knight, & Shoveller, 2013; Eibach & Ehrlinger, 2010): what it means for people in their daily lives, how it is understood, and how this concepts “functions” in people’s lives. In this sense

gender equality should be theoretically constructed not as a “state” or “macrostructural condition” but rather as a process – a negotiated, changeable aspect of people’s lives. We could compare it to the concept of “quality of life” – which can be reflected upon; an individual can strive in this direction, can discuss it with others and compare to others. As researchers, then, we should open our research agenda more to gender equality as a process, and ask about in-depth experiences connected to gender equality – whether people think about gender equality, discuss it, argue about it, or reflect upon it.

Analytical dimensions of gender equality

The central question is how gender equality is conceptualised in quantitative research and, as a result, how it is measured. International studies such as the European Social Survey (ESS), Gender and Generation Survey (GGS), International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) and World Value Survey (WVS) have included variables that measure some aspects of gender equality. As shown in Table 1, in these international survey projects, questions relate mostly to gender equality attitudes – studying attitudes towards gender roles or norms – but also opinions on gender equality as a political aim. Quite frequent are questions on selected practices, mostly connected to sharing household and childcare duties, and less often those on decision making within partnerships, or balancing work-family duties. Only within the European Social Survey are the respondents asked directly about the experience of being discriminated against on the basis of their gender.

Table 1. Dimensions of gender equality studied within international survey projects, compared to the Norwegian survey (Holter et al., 2009)

	Attitudes towards gender norms	Opinions on gender equality as a political aim	Practices	Decision making/financial management	Being discriminated against on the basis of gender	Balancing work-family-free time
World Value Survey (WVS) - wave 2005-2008	X	X	-	-	-	-
Gender and Generation Survey (GGS) - wave 2010-2011	X	-	X	X	-	X
European Social Survey (ESS)	X	-	X	-	X	-
International Social Survey Programme	X	-	X	X	-	X

(ISSP)							
European	Values	X	-	-	-	-	-
Study (EVS)							
Norwegian	survey	X	X	X	X	-	X
2007							

Besides the Norwegian study on gender equality and quality of life (Holter, Svare, & Egeland, 2009), on the national level in both Poland and Norway (the countries taking part in the project) selected gender equality topics have been studied, with most attention paid to work-life balance.² Still, while in Norway the study of Holter et al. (2009) tried to embrace diverse dimensions of gender equality, no similar effort – putting “gender equality” at the centre of survey research – has taken place in Poland.

Gender equality as an attitude – measuring gender equality orientation

Gender equality orientation is the most commonly studied dimension linked to gender equality, and it was included in the majority of the reviewed studies. In most of them, a “gender equality attitude” is considered to be a set of opinions on gender roles and norms, possibly impacting gender equality practices.³ Being “pro-equality” means accepting that men and women do not have strong prescribed gender roles and duties linked to them such as care (see Pulerwitz & Barker, 2007). Besides being a part of an international research project, such as the Gender and Generations Survey or European Social Survey, in 2002 and 2012 the International Social Survey Programme carried out an additional inquiry about the Family and Changing Gender Roles.⁴ The opinions on gender roles and norms are often gathered through opinion polls (very often conducted for example in Poland by CBOS 2013), and much of the research is concerned with family life, work-life balance, reconciliation of family, work and free time (Titkow, Duch-Krzysztozek, Budrowska, 2004; Sadowska-Snarska, 2011; Kwiatkowska, Nowakowska, 2006).

Some studies analyse an attitude favouring gender equality as a political goal (as “an element of democracy” in WVS) and opinions about equality at home, in child rearing etc.

2 Overall 21 Polish and foreign studies have been reviewed. The studies will be quoted within the paper where appropriate.

3 There is research which shows the impact on attitudes on gender equal practices, e.g. Lothaller, Mikula and Schoebi’s study showed that the division of family work was more imbalanced the more traditional gender attitudes partners held (Lothaller, Mikula, & Schoebi, 2009). They also indicated that “Men’s gender attitudes affected the division of household labor, but not the division of childcare.” This may indicate why the division of household tasks is more gendered (Lothaller, Mikula, & Schoebi, 2009).

4 See questionnaire: http://pgss.iss.uw.edu.pl/pdf/kwestionariusze/ISSP_2002_Family-Gender_III_PGSS2002A_.pdf.

(Holter et al., 2009). “Gender equal orientation (equality in attitudes)” was also a central element of the model in the Norwegian study (Holter et al., 2009, including such variables as:

- “attitudes to equality in child rearing
- attitudes to equal sharing of parental leave and parental responsibility
- questions of whether the responsibility for support and work in the home should be shared equally
- whether equality has come far enough
- whether the genders are so different that equality is inappropriate.” (Holter et al., 2009: 173).

This review shows that, first, most quantitative research has concentrated on attitudes towards the roles of women and men within family life and bargaining between working life and family life (in Poland also Antosz, 2012; CBOS, 2013a; Matysiak 2005; Titkow, Duch-Krzystoszek, & Budrowska, 2004). As Table 2 shows, most of the studies concentrated on family life and work life gender roles, with little attention paid to roles in the public sphere, political life and civil society. Secondly, there is more stress on researching women’s roles than those of men, but in some recent studies the questions concerning male roles tend to appear more often. “Mirror” statements appear for statements that were previously asked only about one gender, such as: “A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his/her mother works (GGS)” and “Children often suffer because their fathers concentrate too much on their work (GGS)”; or “women need children in order to be fulfilled” (EVS, GGS), followed by “men need children in order to be fulfilled”. Still, we do not notice the appearance of new questions, even if the research shows transformations within the gender roles. While sticking to the “old” questions might result from the quest for comparability, on the other hand there is a need for new statements describing gender roles. In a reaction to one Polish survey on gender roles, a feminist website commented that: “It is sad that in the 21st century we are still running a survey asking if women have a right to employment”.⁵ It may be that there should be more attempts to ask questions referring to the transformation of women and men’s roles in society, rather than relying on statements referring to traditional roles.

5 http://www.wysokieobcasy.pl/wysokie-obcasy/1,98083,15612263,Gorzka_lista_plac.html, access 17.3.2014.

Table 2. Attitudes towards the roles of men and women (selected from diverse research projects)

<p>FAMILY</p> <p>Mother/father role It is better for the family if the husband is the principal breadwinner and the wife has primary responsibility for the home and the children (AU) A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his/her mother works (GGS) Children often suffer because their fathers concentrate too much on their work (GGS) Fathers as well suited to look after children as mothers (EVS) Women/men need children in order to be fulfilled (EVS, GGS) A mother sacrifices more for the family than a father (Titkow) Some duties such as cooking, ironing, cleaning are the natural duty of women. (Titkow)</p> <p>Mother work-family roles Being a housewife just as fulfilling(WVS)/ Looking after the home or family is just as fulfilling as working for pay (GGS) A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work (Polish General Social Survey PGSS) A pre-school child (<i>actually in PL: small child</i>) is likely to suffer if his or her mother works (PGSS) Women should be prepared to cut down on paid work for sake of family (ESS) It is better for a family if a man works, and a woman takes care of the household and children(PGSS) The man is more responsible for the material well-being of the family than the woman. (Titkow)</p> <p>Division of duties When parents are in need, daughters should take more caring responsibility than sons (GGS) Men should do larger share of household work (ISSP) Men should do larger share of childcare (ISSP) Men should take the same responsibility for home and children (EVS) Important in marriage: to share household chores (EVS) If both the husband and wife work, they should share equally in the housework and care of the children (AU)</p> <p>Financial issues If a woman earns more than her partner, it is not good for the relationship (GGS) Women should be able to decide how to spend the money they earn without having to ask their partner's permission (GGS) Both the man and the woman should contribute to the household income (EVS)</p> <p>Work-family balance There should be satisfactory childcare facilities so that women can take jobs outside the home (AU) Work is best for women's independence (ISSP)</p> <p>Other If parents divorce it is better for the child to stay with the mother than with the father (GGS) Justifiable: For a man to beat his wife (WVS) In a couple it is better for the man to be older than the woman (GGS) For a woman it should be more important to create conditions for her husband's career than to have her own career (PGSS)</p> <p>EDUCATION University is more important for a boy than for a girl (WVS)</p> <p>WORK SPHERE Men make better business executives than women do (WVS) Jobs scarce: Men should have more right to a job than women (WVS)/ Men should have more right to job than women when jobs are scarce (GGS) Ideally, there should be as many women as men in important positions in business and government (AU)</p>

Does the gender of a person impact the level of salary? (Antosz, 2012)

POLITICAL SPHERE

Men make better political leaders than women do(WVS)(GGS)

Women should take care of the households, and leave governing the country to the men (P6) (PGSS)

GENDER EQUALITY

In democracy: Women should have the same rights as men have (WVS)

Discrimination of girls and women as most important global problem (WVS)

Gender equality, meaning that men and women are equal, has come far enough already (Images)

Gender equality has already been achieved for the most part (Images)

Work to achieve gender equality today benefits mostly well-to-do people (Images)

The government should take actions to assure equal treatment (Antosz, 2012)

The government should take actions to assure equal treatment of specific groups: women, single parents (Antosz, 2012)

POLICY SOLUTIONS FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Are you for or against such a quota system which guarantees a fixed proportion of places for women in government?

Are you for or against such a quota system which guarantees a fixed proportion of places for women to study in universities?

Are you for or against such a quota system which guarantees a fixed proportion of places for women in executive positions?

Are you for or against such laws that promote equal salaries for men and women in the same position? (IMAGES, 2013b)

In relation to the last argument, there seems to be a need for more sensitive indicators, especially in some countries including Norway, where the consensus for some statements is very high. If an indicator receives more than 90% agreement, it does not differentiate the respondents substantially (e.g. “University is more important for a boy than for a girl” from WVS). There is a possibility that many statements are “overheard” and respondents have “learnt” how to respond to them following social expectations. Finally, “political correctness” is a problem when researching attitudes – many people “know” what should be answered in the questions on gender norms, but this does not necessarily mean that this reflects their views and practices. The solution could be trying to find questions which are not so easy to answer, such as stories, described situations of persons or families, instead of simple and abstract sentences. Still, some questions might be useful in international comparisons. While some statements used in Norway received almost univocal agreement, in Poland the same statements received less acceptance (e.g. for the statement “Men should have more right to a job than women when jobs are scarce” more than 90% of Norwegians disagreed or strongly disagreed, while in Poland the figure was 53% – ESS). Last but not least, it is also important also to mention the “Gender-equitable young man” scale that aims at researching attitudes toward “gender-equitable” norms among men (Pulerwitz & Barker, 2007). The gender-equitable young man has been operationalised as a man who:

- *Seeks relationships with women based on equality, respect, and intimacy rather than sexual conquest. This includes believing that men and women have equal rights and that women have as much “right” to sexual agency as do men.*
- *Seeks to be involved in household chores and child care, meaning that they support taking both financial and care-giving responsibility for their children and household.*
- *Assumes some responsibility for sexually transmitted infection prevention and reproductive health in their relationships. This includes taking the initiative to discuss reproductive health concerns with their partner, using condoms, or assisting their partner in acquiring or using a contraceptive method.*
- *Is opposed to violence against women under all circumstances, even those that are commonly used to justify violence (e.g., sexual infidelity).*
- *Is opposed to homophobia and violence against homosexuals. (Although not directly related to male-female interactions, in the formative research, men often included “nonhomosexual” in their definition of what it was to be a “real” man, and homophobic comments were reportedly frequently used as a way to pressure or ridicule any man seen as being too “soft” on women (e.g., nonviolent). Thus, this domain was considered part of the locally defined notion of gender-equitable.) (Pulerwitz & Barker, 2007, p. 326)*

The scale consists of items that measure equitable and inequitable attitudes toward gender norms in five domains: (a) domestic work and caring for children, (b) sexuality and sexual relationships, (c) reproductive health and disease prevention, (d) intimate partner violence, and (e) homosexuality and close relationships with other men (Pulerwitz & Barker, 2007). As this scale has not yet been used in Poland, one might consider using the scale within this context to test its intercultural sensitivity.

Table 3. Gender Equitable Men Scale (IMAGES, 2013a)

The next set of questions will ask you about your **views on relations between men and women**. Please indicate if you totally agree, partially agree or disagree with the following statements.

Attitudes	Totally Agree	Partially agree	Disagree
A woman’s most important role is to take care of her home and cook for her family.	1	2	3
Men need sex more than women do.	1	2	3
Men don’t talk about sex, you just do it.	1	2	3
There are times when a woman deserves to be beaten.	1	2	3
Changing diapers, giving kids a bath, and feeding the kids are the mother’s responsibility.	1	2	3
It is a woman’s responsibility to avoid getting pregnant.	1	2	3
A man should have the final word about decisions in his home.	1	2	3
Men are always ready to have sex.	1	2	3
A woman should tolerate violence in order to keep her family together.	1	2	3
I would be outraged if my wife asked me to use a condom.	1	2	3

A man and a woman should decide together what type of contraceptive to use.	1	2	3
I would never have a gay friend.	1	2	3
If someone insults me, I will defend my reputation, with force if I have to.	1	2	3
To be a man, you need to be tough	1	2	3
Men should be embarrassed if they are unable to get an erection during sex.	1	2	3

Gender equality as practice – in family and at work

The research on gender equality practices concentrated centrally on family practices, most of all of equal sharing of domestic and care duties, and in the area of employment on highlighting issues of discrimination in employment and unequal treatment as far as recruitment, advancement or salaries are concerned.

Table 4 summarises different approaches to studying practices within the family sphere. Gender equality as a practice is usually operationalised as equal sharing of household and/or care duties between partners (married and/or cohabitating) (Neyer et al., 2013a). The Norwegian study (Holter et al., 2009b) constructed a gender-equal practices index based on home practices among married and cohabiting couples regarding equal sharing of housework, equal sharing of caring work, but also equal decision making (decision making is discussed in the next sub-chapter on power, although it could also be understood as a practice).

Among the reviewed studies, the questions concerning duties connected household care and childcare differ according to the categories of duties or tasks that are used. In general there are three strategies for researching division of duties in both areas. The first is to use rather general categories such as “Daily care of child”, and the second strategy tries to build a thorough detailed list seeking to embrace all the possible duties and tasks (e.g. in Diversia González, Díez, López, Martínez, & Morgado, 2012; Titkow et al., 2004). While most of the studies give the answer “not applicable”, in IMAGES the lists for daily tasks connected to care duties differ depending on the age of the child (IMAGES, 2013b) – this strategy can possibly lower the number of “non-applicable” answer choices. The third strategy is to ask for the approximate total number of hours spent personally per week on housework or on childcare duties. The Diversia project additionally suggested researching not only daily care duties, but also so-called “special situations” like a child being sick, parents travelling for work etc. (González et al., 2012) – the Diversia results show that division differs depending on daily and special situations.

Importantly, the Diversia project also suggested researching the care duties not only linked to raising children but also those directed towards other dependent persons; and the list of duties is different in this case (González et al., 2012). For example, the research of Krzyżowski (2011), using SHARE data for Poland, shows that women are most overburdened with care for grandchildren and toward their elderly parents. Therefore, care duties measured only on the level of childcare practices might only give a partial picture. This also shows that gender-equal practices are not only important within a relationship of partners, but also within other relations such as parents–children and elderly parents–adult children. As Stanisiz writes (2013, pp. 85–86), family “is not just a relation between one woman and one man, but between women and women and men and men who describe themselves as relatives”.

The categories of answers to the questions on persons involved in/doing the tasks differ substantially between the surveys: sometimes only a respondent and a partner are taken into account, and the respondent is asked to disregard help from others, like in IMAGES, for example (Barker et al., 2011). In other cases third persons or institutions are also included. GSS included specifically partners and other persons living in the households or not, as well as assuming that children can do some tasks themselves (GSS, 2012). In the Diversia research the full list of possible helpers was listed (González et al., 2012). External (paid) help is more often asked about (e.g. Do you or your partner get help from others for the following tasks? – Holter et al., 2009).

Another factor differentiating the answer categories is the way respondents are asked about frequency – is the task just done by a person (“who does” or “who takes care”), or how often a person does specific tasks e.g. always respondent/usually respondent/respondent and partner about equally/usually partner/always partner (GSS, 2012).

Division of parental leave is also asked about – this is an issue researched especially in countries where equal division of leave is possible, e.g. Sweden, or division of temporary leave in the case of a child’s sickness (Houkes, 2013; Sörlin et al., 2011). Questions concerning awareness of the regulations linked to parental/paternal/maternal leave are also asked (Barker et al., 2011).

Many surveys (e.g. González et al., 2012) additionally analyse satisfaction with division of duties between partners. This points in the direction mentioned in the first

chapter of this working paper – the subjective evaluation of equality that in the case of respondents can be based on other principles than those of the researchers.

While most of the projects to date have concentrated on researching “tasks” and “duties”, the project should consider new ways of operationalising the concept of gender equality practices, for example through responsibilities rather than the tasks one fulfils (Doucet, 1995; Harryson, Novo, & Hammarström, 2012). The authors stress the importance of perceived responsibility, rather than equal hours in sharing the tasks, which was not associated with psychological distress (although other research brings contradictory results stressing the importance of fulfilled tasks). As they notice, the responsibility for the task implies not only direct engagement in “doing” the task, but also indirect aspects such as planning or scheduling, which is not reflected in the measure of time (hours) spent on the task. Responsibility is more a hidden dimension of the relationship than gender-equal practices, and as Holter et al. suspect the dimension of responsibility is more traditionally gendered and would change more slowly than equality practices (Holter et al., 2009, p. 207)

Besides the division of household duties, the GEQ study should possibly also look at the division of free time (from an objective point of view – number of hours – and respondents’ subjective one – satisfaction with division). There are some studies that indicate that the division of the free time could also have an impact on quality of life. For example, the Swedish study noticed that women’s and men’s perceptions of the division of housework and the division of leisure time activity are linked to women’s and men’s perceptions of fairness and equality in a relationship (Nordenmark & Nyman, 2003, pp. 190–191). Also, a study on families in Małopolska region indicated that satisfaction with free time results in higher satisfaction with life (Krzaklewska, 2011; González, Diez, López, Martínez, & Morgado, 2012).

Table 4. Measuring gender equal practices within family (selected from diverse research projects)

Childcare duties

I'm going to read out various tasks that have to be done when one lives together with children. Please tell me who in your household does these tasks.

always R/usually R/R and P about equally/usually P/always P/always or usually other person in the household/always or usually someone not living in the household/children do it themselves/not applicable

- dressing the children or seeing that the children are properly dressed
- putting the children to bed and/or seeing that they go to bed
- staying at home with the children when they are ill
- playing with the children and/or taking part in leisure activities with them
- helping the children with homework
- taking the children to/from school, day care centre, babysitter or leisure activities (GSS, 2012)

In your family, who takes care of the children in each of these daily life situations?

Options: Interviewed/Partner/Grandparents/Other relatives/Baby sitter/Institutional care/Other

- Caring for children before going to school (hygiene, breakfast)
- Taking the children to school and bringing them home
- Lunch time
- Supervising homework
- Dealing with extracurricular and leisure activities (sports, parties,)
- Dinner time
- Bedtime routines (González et al., 2012)

And again in your family, who takes care of the children in the following special situations?

Options: Interviewed/Partner/Grandparents/Other relatives/Baby sitter/Institutional care/Other

- Taking care of children when they are sick
- School holidays
- Strikes at school, carer not available
- When you have to travel for work reasons
- When your partner has to travel for work reasons
- Taking the children to the doctor
- Attending school meetings
- When you have to work during the weekend
- When your partner has to work during the weekend (González et al., 2012)

On average, how many hours a week do you spend looking after family members (e.g. children, elderly, ill or disabled family members)? (ISSP 2012)

Disregarding the help you and/or your partner may get from others, how do/did you and your partner distribute the following tasks related to the care of children?

- | | Always me | Usually me | Equally or done together | Usually partner | Always partner | N/A |
|--|-----------|------------|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----|
| - Daily care of child | | | | | | |
| - Staying at home with a child when he/she is sick | | | | | | |
| - Collecting child from school/day care centre | | | | | | |
| - Driving or taking the child to leisure-time activities (IMAGES, 2013b) | | | | | | |

If you have children between 0-4 living with you, how often does your partner do any of the following with you or for your children?

Rarely or never Now & again Several times a week Every day

- How often does your partner play with your children at home?
- How often does your partner cook or fix food for your children?
- How often does your partner change diapers or any clothes of your children?
- How often does your partner bathe your children?

If you have children between the ages of 5-13 living with you, how often does your partner do any of the following with you or for your children?

Rarely or never Now & again Several times a week Every day

- How often does your partner play with your children at home?
- How often does your partner talk about personal matters with your children?
- How often does your partner do physical exercise or play games outside home with your children?

- How often does your partner help them with their homework?
- How often does your partner cook or fix food for your children?
- How often does your partner wash clothes for your children? (IMAGES, 2013b)

Household chores

Amount of housework in hours: respondent and partner

I would now like to ask you about housework. By housework, I mean things done around the home such as cooking, washing, cleaning, care of clothes, shopping, maintenance of property, but not including childcare or leisure activities.

About how many hours a week, in total, do you personally spend on housework?

And what about your spouse or partner? About how many hours a week does s/he spend on housework? (ESS)

On average, how many hours a week do you personally spend on household work, not including childcare and leisure time activities? (ISSP 2012)

Inquiring who does specific tasks

Now I would like to ask you some questions about who does what in your household. Please tell me who does the following tasks in your household:

- preparing daily meals
- doing the dishes
- shopping for food
- vacuuming
- cleaning the house
- doing small repairs in and around the house
- paying bills and keeping financial records
- organising joint social activities (GSS, 2012)

In your household who does the following things...?

Always me Usually me About equal or both together Usually my spouse/partner Always
my spouse/partner Is done by a third person

- Does the laundry
- Makes small repairs around the house
- Cares for sick family members
- Shops for groceries
- Does the household cleaning
- Prepares the meals (ISSP 2012)

Please could you tell me who performs the following tasks at home?

Options: Interviewee/Partner/Grandparents/Other relatives/Baby sitter/Institutional care/Other

- Preparing food
- Washing the dishes
- Making minor repairs at home
- Vacuum cleaning or mopping the floor
- Throwing out rubbish
- Domestic shopping
- Paying bills, receipts
- Washing clothes
- Writing letters, calling family, friends
- Car care
- Pet care

- Care for plants or a garden (González et al., 2012)

If you disregard the help you receive from others, how do you and your partner divide the following tasks:
I do everything/Usually me/Shared equally or done together/Usually partner/Partner does everything/Does not apply

- Washing clothes
- Repairing the house
- Buying food
- Cleaning the house
- Cleaning the bathroom/toilet
- Preparing food
- Paying bills (IMAGES, 2013b)

General evaluation

Which of the following best applies to the sharing of household work between you and your spouse/partner?

- I do much more than my fair share
- I do a bit more than my fair share
- I do roughly my fair share
- I do a bit less than my fair share
- I do much less than my fair share (ISSP 2012)

What do you think of this division of tasks?

She does a lot more/She does a little more/She does the same/I do a little more/I do lot more(IMAGES, 2013a)

Caring for dependent persons

Now I will read to you different care tasks that, generally, you need to develop with dependent people. Please tell me who usually performs those tasks.

- Keeping company
- Help in household chores
- Hygienic care
- Health care
- Making and giving them lunch or dinner
- Night care
- Document management
- Trips to centres (health, day-care)
- Others (González et al., 2012)

Parental leave division

sharing of parental leave following the birth of a child, and sharing of temporary parental leave for child sickness (Sörlin et al., 2011)

taking parental leave – number of days of parental leave after childbirth (Houkes, 2013)

Still thinking about the same couple, if both are in a similar work situation and are eligible for paid leave, how should this paid-leave period be divided between the mother and the father?

- The mother should take the entire paid leave period and the father should not take any paid leave.
- The mother should take most of the paid leave period and the father should take some of it.
- The mother and the father should each take half of the paid leave period.
- The father should take most of the paid leave period and the mother should take some of it.
- The father should take the entire paid leave period and the mother should not take any paid leave (ISSP 2012)

An additional aspect in studying gender equality practices is the fact that division of household duties or childcare seem to change during the course of an individual's life or a

family cycle. For example in the study of Matysiak, the moment in the family cycle had an impact on the preferred family model (Matysiak, 2005).

The area of work is the second sphere which is widely researched where unequal treatment is concerned (Antosz, 2012; Lisowska, 2007; Matysiak, Słoczyński, & Baranowska, 2010). The areas of research concern different aspects of the work environment – including procedures connected to recruitment, advances, professional development, harassment and bullying, as well as balancing family and work duties and relevant support in this area. The most sophisticated tool developed in Poland to study gender equality in the work place is the Gender Index, which is built on the basis of data from companies, human resources department data, and information from management and opinions of workers. The feelings of employees can thus be contrasted with the “objective” data gathered by HR departments (Lisowska, 2007). In this context, an important question is whether workers are actually aware of equal or non-equal treatment in the workplace. From the research perspective, this debate is often considered in studies of discrimination – asking if a person is discriminated against usually indicates a much lower frequency of positive responses than when we ask for specific forms of discrimination, which shows that people might not consider discriminatory acts as discrimination for diverse reasons, such as lack of knowledge (see Stypińska, 2011).

Table 3. Gender-equal practices in the workplace

Gender Index:

Included areas: employee recruitment, advances, protection against being fired, access to professional training, remuneration/salaries, work-family balance, protection against molestation and bullying.

Opinions of employees on issues:

- opinions of employees concerning the recruitment interviews – if during the recruitment they were asked questions concerning their civil status, number of possessed children, procreation plans, child care, availability/flexibility, ability to work after-hours and ability to travel for work
- did you participate in courses, conference and other forms of training paid for by the company?
- have you felt that you have been overlooked for promotion because of your gender?
- are there cases where after maternity leave a person does not return to her previous position?
- are there cases where during the maternity leave or when a women is pregnant she is fired?
- do you feel you have been overlooked in recruitment for professional training because of your gender?
- does your company finance training on your own initiative, sport activities, medical care, holidays (and for your family members) and do you use this funding?
- do you feel that your salary depends on your gender?
- how often does taking care of children conflict with your professional activity?
- are there some solutions in your company for better balance of family and work duties?
- does your company support education of children or child care?
- are you satisfied with the solutions offered by your company?
- have you been treated worse because of your gender?
- are there tools that prevent employees from being treated worse because of their gender?
- have you ever been sexually harassed?
- are there procedures in your company for what a person who is a victim of molestation or discrimination should do? (Lisowska, 2007)

Recruitment of women and men:

Asking about the number of children a person has

Asking about plans concerning children

Asking about who will take care of the children when the person is at work (Antosz, 2012)

“Five indicators of gender equality were created through aggregating workplace data and calculating the women/men ratio for: (I) number of employees; (II) mean net salary; (III) mean educational level; (IV) mean net days of parental leave; and (V) mean net days of temporary parental leave. A ratio of 1 represents total equality between women and men.” (Elwér, Harryson, Bolin, & Hammarström, 2013)

Gender equality as equal power in relations (with a contribution from Anna Ratecka⁶)

In the reviewed studies, power is often operationalised as **possessed resources which are linked with power or capacity to act** (Neyer et al., 2013), an approach that has its roots in resource theory (Becker, 1976). In the Norwegian study, power is included as the “resources distribution dimension”, which was one correlated with equal practices and to a lesser extent equal attitudes (Holter et al., 2009). The resources included in diverse studies are: education, income, occupational position, type of employment (part-time or full-time), control over household economy (finances), and house ownership. In general, the economic

⁶ An extended version of this chapter was presented on 9 May 2014 during a conference in Łódź, “Power and gender equality”, authored by Ewa Krzaklewska and Anna Ratecka.

factor is the one most often considered. Another role of resources in studying power within relationships is the usage of valuable resources by partners. Duch-Krzystoszek mentions three such areas: usage of the car, free time and one's own space in the house (Duch-Krzystoszek 2007: 72-74).

Secondly, power is studied through the patterns of decision making that are taken into account (Duch-Krzystoszek, 2007; Mikołajczyk-Lerman, 2006). The decisions studied concern decisions like bringing up children, spending free time or weekends, and management of finances – both regular and more major spending (see Table 4). The problem of a quantitative approach to decision making is that it does not reflect the actual power balance. Adrienne Rich (1977, p. 111) referred to this situation as powerless responsibility – a situation where decision making is more linked to the workload that has to be done than to the actual impact on decisions (Duch-Krzystoszek, 2007; International Social Survey Programme, 2013). The decisions should be studied according to their importance (whether they concern important issues or everyday living) and also the importance in the perception of the partners – men tend to engage in the decisions in the areas they find important (Duch-Krzystoszek 2007: 99). Also, the broader situation of the couple/family influences the decision-making process – for example, in low-income marriages women are overburdened with decisions concerning managing money (Stamp, 1985; Vogler & Pahl, 1994). Hence, the patterns of money allocation might be used as another way of studying power.

Table 4. Measurement of power in relations

Resources distribution

education, income, and full or part-time employment (Sörlin et al., 2011a)

income and occupational position (classified in a ranking order of dominance as suggested by Erikson, 1984) (Backhans, Burström, Lindholm, & Månsdotter, 2009)

control over household economy (who is responsible for planning the family economy), wage difference, occupational position and difference in occupational position (Nordenmark & Nyman, 2003)

who is the main provider (earns most of the income), education and house ownership (Holter et al., 2009b)

who is the head of the family (Duch-Krzystoszek 1996)

Decision making

Who usually makes/made the decisions about how to bring up your children?

When you and your spouse/partner make decisions about choosing shared weekend activities, who has the final say?

When you and your spouse/partner make decisions about buying major things for home, who has the final say?

- Mostly me
- Mostly my spouse/partner
- Sometimes me/sometimes my spouse/partner
- We decide together/decided together
- Someone else (ISSP 2012)

In your household, who most often decides about:

(women, men, depends or together)

- What is for dinner
- Regular spending – food or cleaning supplies
- Bigger spending – for example washing machine or TV
- Meetings with family or friends
- How to spend free time
- How to spend holidays and free days
- How to raise children (CBOS, 2013a)

Who had the final word about decisions involving how your family spends money on? or

Who in your family or relationship usually has the final say in how you spend money?

- Food and clothing
- Large investments such as buying a car, or a house, or a household appliance
- Regarding spending time with family friends or relatives

Mother/father/both equally/others (IMAGES, 2013b)

How do you and your partner/spouse organise your household income? Which of the items on this card fits best?

- I manage all the money and give my partner/spouse his/her share
- My partner/spouse manages all the money and gives me my share
- We pool all the money and each takes out what we need
- We pool some of the money and keep the rest separate
- We each keep our own money separate
- Other (GSS, 2012)

Power is a feature of all kind of relationships, not only between partners/spouses but also between parents and children, grandparents etc. However, gendered power relations in a family are usually considered in the context of heterosexual couples. As a study conducted in the US shows, the language of equality is important in the couples' framing of the relationship (Mahoney & Knudson-Martin, 2009). However, gender itself could be considered as a resource as it highly influences the power balance in the family, even if this is not realised by the partners – they assume that the relationship is equal, not expecting gender norms or stereotypes to govern the way they construct their relationship – the authors call this the “myth of equality” (Mahoney & Knudson-Martin, 2009).

A more nuanced approach to studying power than those based on resources or decision-making patterns is based on the analysis of the position/capacity of partners within the relationship. For example, Mahoney & Knudson-Martin propose analysing whether the interests of each partner are considered important in relationship management (2009). Also, Neyer et al. suggest looking at the ability to define the situation and what is important for the relationship or family (Neyer et al., 2013). Gender equality is seen by Mahoney & Knudson-Martin as a process. The main concept they use is that of “personal power”, which is the “ability of one person to influence a relationship towards his or her own goals, interests and well being” (Mahoney & Knudson-Martin, 2009, p. 10). The authors list the dimensions of the concept defined in this way, which are: setting an agenda for discussion and negotiation, each partner's needs being heard and considered equally, not getting “your own way”, decisions maximising the wellbeing of both partners, empowerment – each partner enables the other's choices and freedom to be expanded, each is equally entitled to pursue his/her goals. The framework the authors suggest includes four dimensions:

- relative status (e.g. whose interests shape what happens in the family?)
- attention to the other (do both partners notice and attend to each other needs?)
- accommodation patterns (e.g. is one partner more willing to organise activities around the other?)
- well-being (e.g. does one partner seem to be better off?) (Mahoney & Knudson-Martin, 2009, p. 13).

Evertsson and Nyman (2011), adapting further the vision of gender equality as a process, suggest looking at gender equality as a lived experience within diverse dimensions of life and analysing in what situations gender equality is negotiated within the daily routine behaviour of families: “in what matters do couples negotiate, how important are different power

resources and how are they used, what does the negotiation process look like and does it vary according to factors such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, education level and gender ideology.” (Evertsson & Nyman, 2011, p. 75). In this light, the analysis of areas of conflict can highlight power patterns in relationships. But besides conflicts we shall concentrate on non-conflictual strategies, as Polish research shows that women prefer non-conflict-based strategies for persuading their husbands to do more household work (or they prefer to do it themselves than to ask for help) (CBOS, 2013a, Titkow et al., 2004).

Table 5. Negotiating power in relations – gender equality as a process.

<p>Conflicts</p> <p>Now I am going to read out a list of things that couples may have disagreements about. Within the last 12 months, how often did you and your partner/spouse have a disagreement about [household chores]? Never/seldom/sometimes/frequently/very frequently</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - household chores - money - use of leisure time - sex - relations with friends - relations with parents and in-laws - child-raising issues - having children - drinking alcohol (ISSP 2012) <p>How often do you disagree about sharing of household work? (ISSP 2012)</p> <p>Negotiations</p> <p>How women persuade men to help in household duties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Asking nicely - Emphasising how much they do themselves - Indicating their lack of strength etc. (Titkow et al., 2004) <p>What arguments men use when they do not want to do household duties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I am very tired, I will do it tomorrow - Each of us should do what they do best - Women are more suited to household duties - I cannot manage these things, you have to show me how to do it, etc. (Titkow et al., 2004)
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Gender equality in a life course perspective

“Gender equality in childhood and youth” was an additional analytical dimension in the Norwegian study, as it was considered as a dimension possibly impacting current gender equality practices. When considering the life-course perspective, the study results did not show a very strong effect of gender equality in childhood and youth on gender equality later in life – the effect was moderate. But the study showed that the risk of violence in homes where the father had more power in decision making was almost three times greater than in

gender-equal homes (Holter et al., 2009; Holter, 2013). Importantly, this index described the experience of gender equality at home during a person’s childhood rather than the question of whether a child experienced gender (in)equality in childhood. In the very inspiring study of Baunach (2001), the author constructs the index of childhood gender inequality. As noticed by the author, gender equality/inequality may be manifested differently in different phases of the life, therefore we need to take into account the age dimension (Baunach 2001, p. 83). The index reflects the value of a child of a certain gender, and is measured using indicators such as evaluation of the society, affection, differences in social ceremonies, and preference for sons. These two differing perspectives could be valuable for our study. While in the Nordic study it was assumed that the experience of a home with gender equality might impact one’s one practice of gender equality, it could also be valuable to see if experiencing of childhood gender equality can have a similar effect. There are not many studies in this direction, so reflection on childhood gender equality could be one of the added values from the GEQ project (similarly to elder-age gender equality). Interestingly, in the IMAGES project the dimension of education (school) is also considered as an important area of a child’s life.

Table 6. Gender equality in childhood and youth

<p>Gender equality in childhood and youth index</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - equal decision making - division of work in the respondent’s childhood home - having friends of the opposite sex (Holter et al., 2009b) <p>Did your mother ever work for pay for as long as one year, after you were born and before you were 14? Yes, she worked for pay/No (ISSP 2012)</p> <p>IMAGES: areas of respect, household duties, decision making My father or another man who lived with my mother treated my mother with respect. My mother treated my father or another man who lived with her with respect When you were a child or teenager, did your father or another man in the home: prepare food/clean the house/wash clothes/clean the bathroom/toilet/take care of you or your siblings? Who had the final word in your household about decisions involving you and your brothers and sisters (their schooling, their activities)? Who had the final word about decisions involving how your family spent money on: food and clothing/large investments such as buying a car or house or household appliance? (IMAGES, 2013b)</p> <p>School experiences: These next questions ask you about your experiences at school. Please indicate by responding to the corresponding number if this Never happened to you, or it happened Sometimes, or Often or Very Often. E.g. Girls were mostly treated with respect at my school, Me and my school friends were a group and we would arrange to have sex with girls after school, My friends and I would touch girls or say sexual things to them to tease them (IMAGES, 2013b)</p>
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Areas of gender equality experience

As the chapter shows, at present gender equality practices as well as GE attitudes and power are researched mostly within the family and work sphere. Education and political life are considered, but only to some extent, and more elaboration of these spheres will be needed. There is also again a need to explore practices in additional life spheres, such as sexual relations, violence and participation in civil society and/or the local community.

Sexual relations is a dimension not often researched within European projects, but power within sexual relations or the communication aspect are an important dimension of gender equality when studying the impact of gender relations on health behaviour. In some countries, power in relationships is seen as a very important factor that might impact health endangering behaviours e.g. risk of HIV infection. Not only actual situations concerning sexuality (like the responsibility for using contraceptives) are studied, but also in the dimension of attitudes there are many questions concerning gender roles in sexual relations. One example of such an instrument that measures attitudes towards men and women roles is the gender beliefs scale tested in South Africa (Latka et al. 2009), with statements such as “If men do not have lovers their friends laugh at them”, or “Women who are financially independent do not want to commit themselves to one relationship”. While the scale is not easily translated into the European context, it remains a sphere of life that is rarely researched. This may be due to the fear of lack of response or drop-out rate in the context where questions on sexual relations are considered taboo or intimate matters.

Violence was also an aspect included in the Norwegian study (Holter et al., 2009a) in connection to gender equality. The IMAGES study (*IMAGES Overview and Guide*, 2013) included in extended form questions on violence (sexual violence, experience of violence in childhood, in family, being a perpetrator etc.). As indicated in the Norwegian survey, those respondents who reported living in non-equal homes ran a much larger risk of experiencing violence than those who came from equal homes, also when controlled for other variables (Holter et al., 2009a). Occurrence of violence was not treated as a dimension of gender equality, but as a situation that might result from gender inequality. Still, violence could be seen as expression of power within gendered relations.

A third area rarely studied is that of participation in civil society and/or in the local community. How do women and men practise gender equality in the local community? Do they feel they have the possibility to impact their local community? Do they have the

capacity to act and bring change within communities? This area could involve participation of respondents in political life, non-governmental organisation, labour unions, volunteering, local community organisations, circles or projects. To what extent do the respondents feel that they can bring change to their community (capacity) or feel that they are able to influence their situation or that of their social group, village or town?

Contexts of gender equality

This review shows that in operationalisation of gender equality one needs to analytically differentiate between gender equality as a condition and gender equality as an experience. The latter conceptualisation of gender equality as condition relates to the contexts of individual life and activities, and the second to the perception of one's situation by an individual. Backhans et al.'s (2009) study took into account both dimensions mapping complex interrelations: equality within couples and gender equality in the municipality in which individuals live. The results indicate the importance of the context for enjoying benefits of gender equality, and the interrelations are complex and differ between men and women. This shows that the importance of studying both the experience of gender equality and the context of GE is critical, as the effects of gender equality are different when the context changes. One must also consider the differing situation in countries where gender equality seems almost to have been achieved and those in which inequality is still more pronounced (Backhans et al., 2007) – in these cases the relations between GE experience and contexts might differ. Measurement of the context of gender equality in the reviewed studies included most of all questions of economic participation, political participation, care work and child care support system (see Table 7).

Table 7. Measuring local contexts of gender equality

Gender-equal situation in the region:

Participation in political and economic decision making, work opportunities and income, as well as time constraints (Backhans, Lundberg, & Månsdotter, 2007)

Gender equality at the area level:

Economic resources – average men and women income

Political participation – the proportion of women versus men in municipal councils

Occupational sex segregation – the proportion of men versus women among people employed in manufacturing

Caring work – The indicator is measured as the proportion of the total temporary parental leave taken by women versus men in the municipality. (Backhans et al., 2009, p. 1390)

New gender equality index for municipalities (Norway):

1. Institutional and structural frameworks for local equality

1.1. Governmental facilitation of potential equality

- Share of children aged 1-5 years in kindergarten

1.2. Structure of industry and educational patterns

- Share of employees in gender-balanced industries (one-digit level)

- Ratio between women and men in the public sector

- Ratio between women and men in the private sector

- Share of pupils in upper secondary school in a gender-balanced education programme

2. Men's and women's local adaptations

2.1. Distribution of time, work/care

- Ratio between the share of men and women in the labour force

- Ratio between the share of men and women in part-time employment

- Share of fathers taking statutory paternity leave or more (from parental leave in connection with childbirth)

2.2. Distribution of individual resources/influence

- Ratio between the share of men and women with higher education

- Share of female managers

2.3. Distribution of political influence

- Share of women in the municipal council

2.4. Distribution of money

- Ratio between men's and women's average gross income

(<https://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/statistikker/likekom>, access 03.06.2014)

Conclusions

The review of the studies indicated that the GEQ study need to consider gender equality as multidimensional. Diverse analytical dimensions should be included in it, as well as “objective” and “subjective” evaluation of gender equality. Based on the results from the qualitative study, the new dimensions of gender equality should be taken into account – e.g. gender equality as agency. Secondly, gender equality should be considered within multiple contexts. Most research concentrates on studying the context of family life, then that of work and employment. Very few studies look at diverse contexts at the same time and link them. There are almost no studies that look at gender equality in civic and public life from the perspective of an individual participant. It may be possible that gender equality in some sphere of life compensates for gender equality in other spheres, or gender equality in a

certain sphere is critical and cannot be substituted with gender equality in another area. Therefore, the study should map the complex interrelations between areas and dimensions of gender equality. Third, we need to differentiate between gender equality as an “experience” and gender equality as a “condition” (the structural context that impacts the individual quality of life and possibly realisation of gender equality on the individual level). The gmina (community)-based index of gender equality could be a basis for survey sampling, so the statistical models could contain within themselves the complex interrelations between gender equality as experienced by an individual and the GE context. Possibly we could also capture more interpersonal contexts by studying attitudes and practices of gender equality by relatives, close friends or neighbours.

The experience of gender equality and its negotiative aspect can possibly be captured by the usage of qualitative methods. Therefore, the qualitative research within the project should explore: the concept of gender equality – what it means for people in their daily lives, how it is understood, whether it is “stable” or whether its definitions change with time, if it is something descriptive or something to be achieved, and how it is negotiated within relations (not just husband and wife, but e.g. mother-children, between siblings, between school children-teacher). How do the discourses of fairness and sameness/difference co-exist? How do they relate to gender equality? Also, in what contexts is gender equality an important dimension of experience, and which ones would impact quality of life? What would the costs and benefits of gender equality be? Would gender equality lower or improve the quality of life?

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