



# Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

3rd ESVDC WEBINAR

ADVOCACY IN CAREER GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING

International perspectives

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## GENDER EQUALITY AND ADVOCACY COUNSELING: IS AWARENESS ENOUGH?

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# Summary

- Gender inequalities
- Occupational Gender Stereotypes
- Gender-sensitive Career Counseling
- Counselors' styles
- How to help clients
- Ideas from epistemology
- Conclusions

STARTING POINTS ...

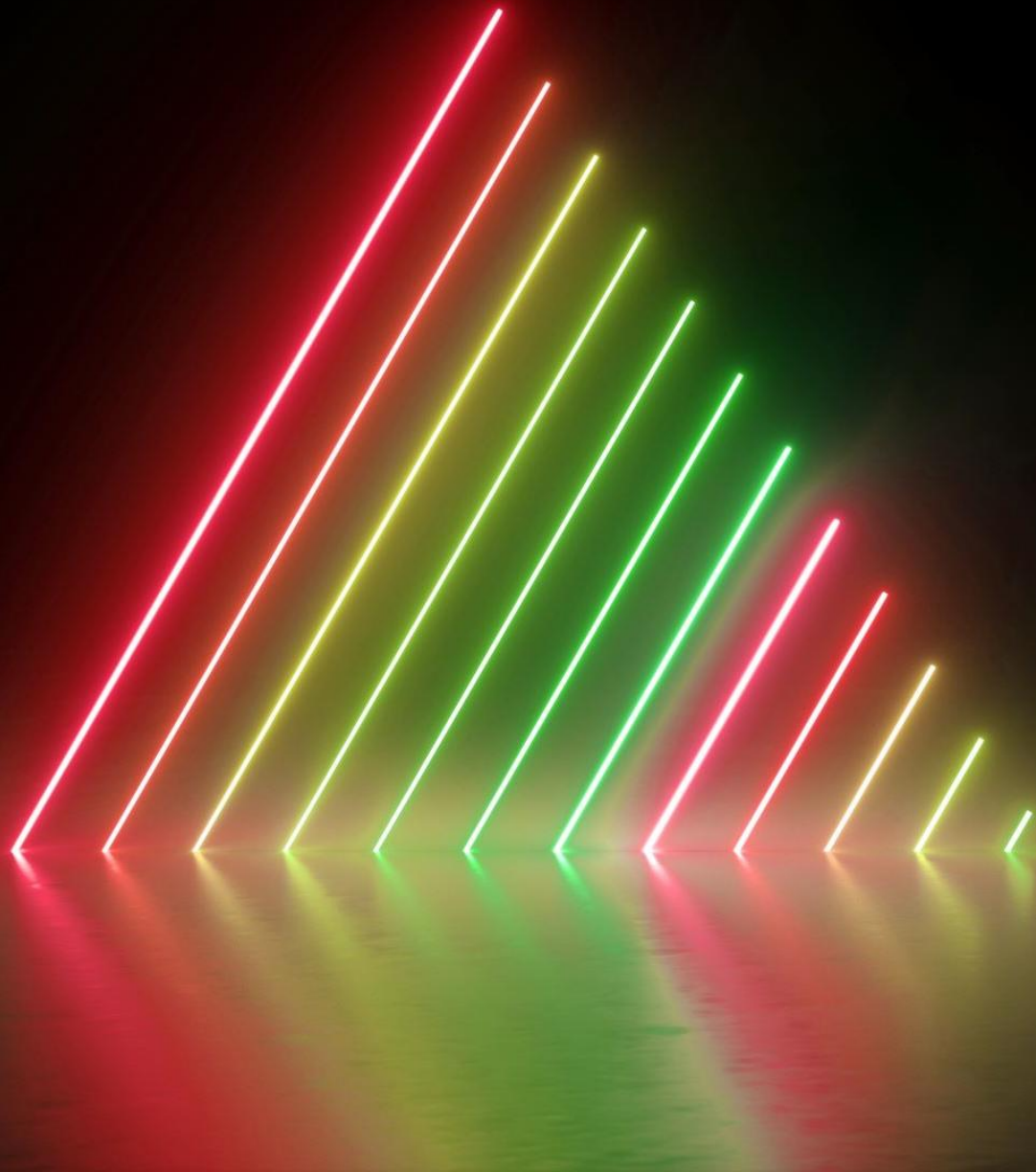
Gender Stereotypes

Gender Inequalities

Gender Pay Gap

2030 AGENDA

Methodological Implication

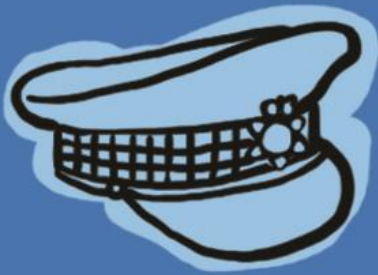


GENDER INEQUALITY: IS IT A  
PROBLEM OF THE PAST?

The socio-cultural changes of the last thirty years could suggest that, in Western societies, success and failure of the life trajectories are no longer dependent on Ethnicity, Gender, Social Classes. Is it true? Or is it a rhetorical speech?

**Women and men potentially have the same training and employment opportunities available at birth.** Actually, the possibilities to have specific occupations are different for them, influencing the relationship among jobs, remuneration, and freedom.





Weak



Sweet



Ambitious

20XX



Wild

## GENDER INEQUALITY: AN INVISIBLE BARRIER

Despite the existence of national and international laws to guarantee equal opportunities and progressive reaching of gender equity, **women are still mostly absent from public scene and apical positions in political and economical fields.**



GENDER STEREOTYPES

Agentic	Communal
Competence Strength Independence Responsibility Initiative	Caring Kindness Dependence Innocence Passivity

Gender stereotypes **consist of both descriptive** (how men and women are) **and prescriptive** (how men and women must act to be real men and women) components.

# Occupational Gender Stereotypes

- As the EU Research and Innovation program “Horizon 2020” has specified, realization of gender equity remains a major challenge.
- This topic is particularly important, as young European adults are unprepared to recognize and contrast gender stereotypes and discriminations
- The reason is the widespread presence of the “free to choose” rhetoric, i.e. the common, but incorrect, belief that gender inequalities no longer exist.
- Gender stereotypes have a relevant effect on occupational choices because they concern the occupational roles and the types of training men and women should undertake.
- As a result, occupational gender stereotypes can significantly affect career choices by promoting:
  - distorted beliefs about education, training, and the labor market.
  - influencing perceptions of viable occupational options and discouraging individuals from enterprising educational and occupational pathways considered unsuitable for their gender.
- However, as shown by statistics on employment rates (EUROSTAT), these cognitive and social processes penalize women more than men.

# Gender-sensitive career counseling

- Gender sensitive counseling is not a theory of counseling.
- It's a conceptualizing perspective when working with clients.
- It concerns different theoretical approaches and emphasizes the need to examine gender issues working as a counselor.
- Two main issues:
  - How could a counselor's beliefs about the roles men and women have to play in the educational and labor markets have an impact on the counselor's everyday practice (Bhargava & Sriram, 2016)?
  - How can counselors recognize clients' stereotyped beliefs and use them in their activities to support their clients' occupational choices?



# Counselors' styles

- The importance of gender in career counseling still has to be fully recognized (APA, 2023).
- Three kinds of counselor style regarding gender issues can be identified
- 1. **Gender blindness:** Counselors tend to act with cultural preconceptions and biases about the roles of men and women and do not consider the gender issues in their counseling practice: counselors encourage acceptance of the *status quo*, fail to discuss gender roles, and miss issues of gender discrimination.
- 2. **Gender neutrality:** Gender is not considered a resource and clients (both women and men) receive the same consulting. Counselors observe the principle of equal treatment of men and women very strictly. They work only on the clients' ideas and projects – often influenced by gender stereotypes – without introducing any new non-stereotyped ideas.
- 3. **Gender consciousness:** Counselors consider gender as a fundamental factor in occupational choices and are aware of gender barriers to individuals' occupational choices. They believe it is possible to modify the social and work environment rather than merely adapting their clients to the environment. Counselors do not limit themselves to stereotypical choices, but discuss multiple options and possible alternatives with their clients.

# Self reflection process

- In case of **Gender Consciousness**, counselors must become aware of their gender expectations and assumptions, as gender stereotypes are implicit.
- Counselors should engage themselves in a process of self-reflection regarding their own gender prejudices, so that they can offer ethical and appropriate counseling to those clients whose perspectives and career decisions significantly differ from those of the counselor.
- Once the counselors have focused on this **self-reflection process**, they can genuinely help their clients to question their own gender expectations and to explore occupational representations and roles beyond gender stereotypes.

# Helping clientes: strategies to reduce stereotypes

## Strategies to reduce clients' gender stereotypes:

- informing women before a difficult math test about a stereotype threat and providing a means to explain the anxiety that might be experienced allows candidates to improve their performance.
  - asked individuals to think of a counter-stereotypical image of the woman (a strong woman) before an implicit assessment of gender stereotypes
  - trained participants to “just say no” when they were presented in a gender-stereotypical way.
- Regarding the first category of interventions, counselors could inform individuals of the negative consequences of gender stereotypes, stimulating their awareness of social and cultural factors that can influence their occupational decisions before they make career decisions.
  - For the second category, clients can be provided with counter-stereotypical information, using movies, stories and pictures stimulating exposure to non-traditional models, and can be encouraged to reflect on different occupational roles that do not inevitably overlap “stereotyped patterns”
  - with the third category, counselors can help clients to avoid stereotypical self-presentations in the workplace and recognize stereotypic associations between personal attributes and occupational characteristics by training them to analyze occupations through accurate job analyses rather than basing their assessments on stereotypical traits.

## And more...

- Career Counselor should not only encourage non-stereotyped beliefs and behaviors, but they should also provide specific strategies to support non-stereotyped choices. For example, it is useful to train individuals to defend their rights in an assertive way, to clarify pros and cons of their choice, and to seek social support in order to reach their career goals.
- That this is particularly important for young people who experience gender discrimination. They should be helped to seek supporters (e.g. family members, peers, mentors, and teachers) who do not adhere to stereotyped visions of the labor market.



## STRENGTHS OF FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY

- One of the significant contributions of feminist epistemology has been **self-reflexivity in research and interventions**, which has prompted critical examination of one's social position and its possible impact on the conduct of our counseling, as well as the different points of view of women.

- Interventions must be tailored to understand the **complex intersections of class, ethnicity, religion, gender**, and so on. The methods must adapt to the needs of contemporary social realities

# FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

## METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS: FROM REFLECTIONS TO ACTIONS

### QUESTIONS

- **Questioning Your Questions:** Who benefits from asking this question?
- What assumptions are inherent in the concepts under investigation? How can psychologists produce a body of work that addresses (rather than justifies) inequalities?
- Although the answers to these questions cannot always be clear and linear, they cannot be ignored.

### RIFLEXIVITY

It is appropriate to consider the **role of everybody in the construction of meaning and knowledge, since he/she cannot be separated from the research process itself**, abandoning the presumed scientific objectivity to consciously reflect on the roles and dynamics of power.

### LANGUAGES

- **Words have meaning but also are sense-making.**
- Dominant discourses are often inadequate for expressing women's experience.

### INTERSECTIONALITY

- How **social locations** are important for understanding their accounts?
- How do a **variety of points of difference 'matter'** to the issue's definition?

## THE NATIONAL PLANS: THE ROLE OF CULTURAL MULTIPLIERS

- What is proposed are National Plans to help people to identify early the impacts that gender procures in their lives, envisioning strategies for overcoming adverse effects and fostering innovative professional and life constructions.
- Teachers, educators, trainers, public and private companies, parents' associations, doctors, social workers, psychologists, career counselors: Training trainers" programs .
- The idea is that everyone could work as an equity and gender **cultural multiplier**.
- The ultimate aim will be to support people, both men and women, in becoming part of every citizen's reality, giving them instruments to create concrete and possible future paths independently of their gender.

## Some references

E. Camussi, C. Annovazzi, L. Montali, M.C. Ginevra (2017)

*Gender-sensitive career counseling. An innovative approach*, in L. Nota, S. Soresi (Editors) *Counseling and Coaching in Times of Crisis and Transitions*. Taylor & Francis, 2017.



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