

Gender and Sex Aspects of Multiple Identities: Young Women and Men from Bratislava and Prague Heading Toward the EU

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Gender and Sex Aspects of Multiple Identities: Young Women and Men from Bratislava and Prague Heading Toward the EU. Previous analyses have shown that young people from Bratislava and Prague consistently show the highest indicators of gender-stereotyping and, at the same time, the lowest interest in gender-related issues from among samples from other European cities and/or regions – Edinburgh, Manchester, Madrid, Bilbao, Bielefeld, Chemnitz, Bregenz area of Vorarlberg, and Vienna (Bianchi, G., 2003). This paper examines the possible backgrounds and contexts of this extreme position of the Czech and Slovak respondents. The data were gathered within the framework of the EC-funded project “Youth and European Identity”. The study uses both quantitative (random sample of 3890 respondents in a survey) and qualitative (51 in-depth interviews) material to analyse sex differences in the multiple identity structures, as well as to identify the gender-related patterns of identity. The results are discussed within the concepts of gender mainstreaming, sexual and intimate citizenship and social identity and self-categorization theories.

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Current processes of transforming Europe into an open space require integration of almost thirty countries with traditions significantly differing in many aspects and for various reasons (history, religion, political regime, economic development, etc.). Differences between male and female individuals with respect to their political, economic, social, cultural, educational, health and other opportunities are only one of the many aspects of the complexity of their everyday lives.

Identities in the contemporary world derive from many sources – nationality, ethnicity, social class, community, gender, sexuality – which may conflict in the construction of identity positions and lead to contradictory and/or fragmented identities (Woodward, K., 1999, p. 1). “Strong” versions of identity, which assume a fundamental and durable sense of selfhood, have been eclipsed by “weak” versions that stress the fluidity, impermanence, complexity and context sensitivity of identities rather than identity (Jamieson, L., 2002). Although each of us may experience struggles between conflicting identities based on our positions in the world, identity gives us our locations in the world and an idea of who we are and of how we relate to others and to the society in which we live (Woodward, K., 1999).

The research tradition in social identity conceptualises the self as a complex system that can be defined at various levels of abstraction; we have a range of social identities corresponding to different category memberships (Hopkins, N. – Reicher, S., 1996; Tajfel, H. – Turner, J. C., 1986). It has been argued that at the more global level – national and supranational – the ongoing EU enlargement processes lead to the transformations in people’s representations of who they are and of their relationships with others (for example, with other nations within the integrating Europe or other ethnic groups). Categories and identities with different meanings are replacing those once routinely used in self-definition (Hopkins, N. – Reicher, S., 1996). At the more personal level, familial relationships have changed. In the West, for example, traditional expectations about the nuclear family – male breadwinner, dependent wife and children – have been challenged, and new family forms and familial identities have emerged. In the same way, sexual identities are disputed in the public arena where it seems increasingly that sexual identities are the subject of political contestation (Woodward, K., 1999).

The authors, drawing on social identity and self categorization theories, also assume that identities do not have separate existences, but that they interact: the significance of any single social identity for an individual depends largely on the other social identities contained in that person’s identity repertoire (Hopkins, N., 2001). At one important level of analysis, therefore, the interactions between more “global” (national, European) and more “personal” (sexual, gender) identities can be examined in terms of multiple group memberships or multiple social identities in interaction (Hopkins, N., 2001; Cameron, J. E. – Lalonde, R. N., 2001).

Most of the recent research in this domain focuses on relationships between European and national identities. It has been shown that these identities are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but whether this is true or not depends on the context in which they are elicited and on particular socio-historical circumstances (see Rutland, A. – Cinnirella, M., 2000 as an example). In this type of research in social psychology,

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European identity has been mainly defined and operationalised as the most inclusive, supranational category enclosing the national one. The meaning of being European, however, has not been explored in depth. Moreover, there is still no empirical evidence shedding light on the interrelations between gender, national and European identities. Some research was devoted to the relationships between gender and national identity (Yuval-Davis, N., 1997).

While sex (besides its connotation of performing sexual activities) refers to the biological quality of an individual, gender refers to the economic, social and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female at a particular time (www.who.int). Scientific knowledge must include more than a simple understanding of sex as only either male or female. As Fausto-Sterling (2000) puts it: "Sex is a vast, infinitely malleable continuum that defies the constraints of even five categories". The commonly accepted five categories include two sexes, and three intersexes: hermaphrodites, male pseudohermaphrodites (called merms), and female pseudohermaphrodites (called ferms), differing in the relative presence of male and female reproductive organs in a particular individual. Similarly, the original bipolar concept of the psychological gender expressed in femininity and masculinity (exclusive and opposing) has been deconstructed into a flexible set of approaches, starting with Sandra Bem's (1974) conceptualisation of androgyny with a common idea that the "best way for a person to be is neither stereotypically male nor female, but having the best qualities of both genders" (Stainton Rogers, W. – Stainton Rogers, R., 2001:115).

A specific problem in relation to the complexity of gender identity is the problem of gender stereotypes – the "schematised sets of beliefs about the psychological traits and characteristics and the behaviour expected of (and seen as appropriate for) men and women" (Stainton Rogers, W. – Stainton Rogers, R., 2001:50). Gender stereotypes are *consensual* throughout society because although we disavow them consciously, we still enact them and see others enact them in the unequal roles and statuses of our daily lives. Similarly, gender stereotypes are still portrayed in the media, and fictional information, although consciously discounted, penetrates our judgments and beliefs as real. The importance of the study of gender stereotypes is supported by the fact that even when objective evidence disconfirms the consensus, we still see it as true (Beall, A. E. – Sternberg, R. J., 1993). Moreover, because consensus defines the "truth", it also transforms gender stereotypes from assumed facts into *values*. And as people tend to cultivate values, a *pressure for "desirable" behaviour* is being created (ibid).

Furthermore, there are numerous links between gender and public policies. The recent discourse is organized around the concept of *gender mainstreaming*³. The Council of Europe has initiated a Commission on Gender Mainstreaming and, gradually, gender mainstreaming has become a *sine qua non* aspect of processes underway on the platform of the European Commission. Gender mainstreaming is defined as a reorganising, improvement, development and reassessment of political processes in order to implement the question of equity of sexes into all levels of politics and in all institutions. Political dimensions of sexuality and gender are the core of the concepts of intimate citizenship (Plummer, K., 1995) and sexual citizenship (Evans, D. T., 1993) which articulate the implementation of sexual human rights in all spheres of life, the rights to be a sexual being in all contexts – biological, intimate, partner, social, cultural, etc. They represent a "supplement" to the traditional contents of citizenship (i.e., civil, political and social rights). Plummer (*op. cit.*) suggests that the realm of intimate citizenship should be added as number four to the three already accepted realms of citizenship.

"I call this intimate citizenship because it is concerned with all those matters linked to our most intimate desires, pleasures and ways of being in the world. Some of these must feed back into the traditional citizenship; but equally, much of it is concerned with new spheres, new debates and new stories... in the future people may have to make decisions around the control (or not) over one's body, feelings, relationships; access (or not) to representations, relationships, public spaces, etc.; and socially grounded choices (or not) about identities, gender experiences, erotic experiences" (Plummer, K., *op. cit.*: 151).

The "coming out" narratives of gay and lesbian and the "breaking the silence" stories of rape survivors were the first major areas of discourse that changed the status quo and influenced politics in the last decades of the 20th century. Currently, we are facing challenges that take it further in politicising sexual contents: these are expressed in discourses on being sexual, pursuing pleasure, possessing bodies, and controlling one's relationships — all of them encompassed in intimate citizenship. According to Plummer, among others the stories to come are the following: **Gender stories**—a narrative of polarized gender needs to be (re) replaced by a narrative of abolished gender enabling living without a tyranny of gender... and **identity**

³ The idea of gender mainstreaming first emerged in the proceedings of the Third UN World Conference on Women (Nairobi, 1985) as an instrument for assertion of women in population development as well as the assertion of women's values within this development. The following, Fourth UN World Conference on Women (Peking, 1995) explicitly approved a strategy for gender mainstreaming formulated as an Action Platform stating that national governments should perform an active and transparent policy of implementing the gender-perspective into all political activities and programs in such a way that any political decision must be preceded by an analysis of its potential influence on both women and men.

stories—as traditional identity stories of gender stability, age boundaries, religious tribalism, family lineage and moral character start to shift ground dramatically, new stories about who are we, who are we to become, what to do, how to act, who to be, are sought for (Plummer, K. *op. cit.*: 157-160, emphasis added).

Research questions and data

In the light of the conceptualisations outlined, we found it challenging to explore the mutual relationships between gender identity, gender stereotypes and European identity. We used multiple indicators allowing the study of relationships between: (a) various aspects of European identification, (b) gender identity, (c) gender stereotypicality, (d) interest in gender equality.

We were particularly interested in exploring: (1) differences between male and female respondents in these issues, (2) interrelations between (a) – (d), (3) subjective meanings of gender in relation to citizenship and career, and (4) specific aspects of European identity related to sex.

The data were collected from random samples comprising 3890 respondents (aged 18-24); almost 400 in each of ten European regions under investigation – Edinburgh and Manchester (the UK), Madrid, and Bilbao (Spain), Bielefeld and Chemnitz (Germany), Vienna and the Bregenz area of Vorarlberg (Austria), Prague (Czech Republic) and Bratislava (Slovakia). In addition to the structured quantitative questionnaire, selected sub-samples of respondents in the survey (N=27 for Bratislava and N= 24 for Prague) were chosen for in-depth semi-structured interviews exploring, among other topics, the subjective constructions of European, national, regional and local identities, citizenship, mobility aspirations, gender aspects of identity and work, and partnering plans.

In the current research project, the gender was quantitatively assessed by questions covering the relative importance of *gender identity* within the overall identity (“How would you rate the following in terms of who you are, that is, how you feel or think about yourself as a person: Your being man or woman?”); the relative importance of *sexuality/sexual orientation* within the overall identity (“How would you rate the following in terms of who you are, that is, how you feel or think about yourself as a person: Your sexuality or sexual orientation?”); *stereotypes about gender roles*⁴ (disagreement with items “All jobs can be done equally well by men and women” and “If a man and woman decide to have a child together, they should be equally involved in looking after the child”; and agreement with the item “A man’s job is to earn money, a woman’s job is to look after the home and children”) as well as *interest in equality between men and women*. The European identity was assessed by the items measuring *the attachment to Europe, the strength of the feeling of being European, the frequency of thinking of oneself as a European citizen* and the relative importance of (future) EU citizenship within the overall identity⁵.

In order to answer the research questions three kinds of analyses were applied:

(1) Descriptive statistics focusing on the relative importance of various sources of identity including gender, sexuality/sexual orientation and European identity; (2) descriptive statistics focusing on sex differences in relevant identity indicators and gender stereotypes; (3) correlation assessment between relevant variables separately for male and female sub- samples; (4) thematic content analysis of qualitative in-depth interviews (based on full transcripts of 51 interviews conducted in Bratislava and Prague).

Results

1. Relative importance of particular sources of identity

The relative importance of particular sources of identity in this sample was analysed more in detail in previous publications (Lášticová, B., 2003; Macháček, L. - Lášticová, B. 2003 for the data from Bratislava and Prague). Country wide, the most important sources of overall identity are friends, family, job and education [$\underline{M} = 3.57$; $SD = 0.730$; $\underline{M} = 3.35$; $SD = 0.982$; $\underline{M} = 3.29$, $SD = 0.929$ and $\underline{M} = 3.26$, $SD = 0.950$ respectively]. Significantly lower [$p = .000$ ⁶] was the rating for the importance of gender and sexuality as sources of overall identity [$\underline{M} = 2.64$; $SD = 1.385$ and $\underline{M} = 2.61$; $SD = 1.369$ respectively; these means do not differ significantly]. The importance of the (future) EU citizenship as a source of overall identity was even lower⁷ [$p = .00$; $\underline{M} = 1.90$; $SD = 1,293$]. This quantitative picture is almost identical in Czech and Slovak samples (Macháček, L. - Lášticová, B., *op. cit.*).

⁴ These questions were not asked in Austria.

⁵ Again, the questions about the attachment to Europe and frequency of thinking of oneself as a European citizen were not asked in Austria. The responses to all the items were measured on a scale from 0 (minimum agreement/interest/identification/ importance...) to 4 (maximum agreement/interest/ identification/importance...). For the full version of the questionnaire, see the Web page of the project “Youth and European Identity”: www.sociology.ed.ac.uk/youth.

⁶ Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, Z values are available on request from the second author.

⁷ The full instrument also assessed other sources of identity, out of which some scored even lower (e.g., religion, accent/dialect); however these are out of the scope of this study.

2. Sex differences in European, gender and sexual identity and gender stereotypicality

To test the effect of the sex of respondents on their ratings of European identity indicators, we performed a one-way ANOVA revealing a significant effect of the sex of respondents on the ratings of “*attachment to Europe*” [F (1, 2775) = 19.628, p = .000], “*feeling of being European*” [F (1, 3808) = 12.288, p = .000] and “*frequency of thinking of self as EU citizen*” [F (1, 2961) = 5.667, p < .05]. In all three measures, women scored significantly higher than men. However, there was no significant effect of the sex of the respondents on the rating of “*importance of being an EU citizen*” for the overall identity (p = 0.067, ns). Moreover, in both questions concerning the citizenship aspects of European identity, both men and women scored under the central point of the scale.

This general pattern of gender differences – women scoring significantly higher than men in items “*attachment to Europe*”, “*feeling of being European*” and “*frequency of thinking of self as EU citizen*” – was also found in the Czech and Slovak data.

To test the effect of the sex of respondents on their ratings of the importance of their gender for their overall identity we performed a one-way ANOVA revealing a significant and strong effect of the sex of respondents on the ratings of the importance of *gender* [F (1, 3823) = 49.72, p = .000]. Again, women scored significantly higher than men. An identical pattern of results was found in Czech and Slovak data.

Table 1: Sex difference in ratings of European identity indicators – country wide (N=3890)

European identity indicators	Sex	Mean	Standard Error	95 % Confidence interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Attachment to Europe	Male	2.116	0.033	2.051	2.180
	Female	2.319	0.032	2.257	2.382
Feeling of being European	Male	2.253	0.028	2.198	2.307
	Female	2.389	0.027	2.336	2.442
Thinking of self as European Citizen	Male	1.529	0.031	1.469	1.590
	Female	1.633	0.030	1.573	1.692
Importance of being EU citizen	Male	1.850	0.029	1.792	1.908
	Female	1.925	0.029	1.869	1.981

Table 2: Sex differences in ratings of the importance of gender for the overall identity – country wide (N=3890)

	Sex of respondents	Mean	Standard Error	95 % Confidence interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Importance of gender	Male	2.491	0.032	2.428	2.554
	Female	2.805	0.031	2.744	2.866

Concerning the ratings of the importance of the *sexuality/sexual orientation* for the overall identity, countrywide no effect of the sex of respondents was found (p = 0.362, ns). However, in Czech and Slovak sample, women scored significantly lower than men (\underline{M} = 2.601 and \underline{M} = 2.746 respectively, p < .05).

Furthermore, the ANOVA showed a significant and strong effect of sex of respondents on scores in all the three *gender-stereotypicality indicators* [F (1, 3066) = 109.946, p = .000; F (1, 3063) = 37.559, p = .000; F (1, 3062) = 85.798, p = .000 respectively]. Countrywide and contrary to the sex differences concerning the importance of gender, men scored significantly higher than women in the agreement with gender stereotypes (Table 3). An identical pattern of results was found in Czech and Slovak data.

Table 3: Gender stereotypes (the more strongly a participant agrees with the first two statements and the more strongly a participant disagrees with the third statement, the less s/he is gender stereotyped). Country-wide except for Austria

Indicators of gender stereotypes	Sex	Mean	Standard Error	95 % Confidence interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Agreement with non-stereotypical statement “ <i>All jobs can be done equally well by men</i> ”	Male	2.599	0.030	2.539	2.659

<i>and women.</i>	Female	3.045	0.030	2.987	3.103
Agreement with non-stereotypical statement “If a man and woman decide to have a child together, they should be equally involved in looking after the child.”	Male	3.503	0.021	3.463	3.544
	Female	3.681	0.020	3.642	3.721
Disagreement with stereotypical statement “A man’s job is to earn money; a woman’s job is to look after the home and children.”	Male	2.955	0.030	2.897	3.013
	Female	3.336	0.029	3.280	3.392

In addition, country wide the *higher stereotypicality of men* was accompanied by their significantly *lower interest in equality between men and women* [$F(1, 3849) = 250.580$; $p = .000$; male: $M = 2.955$, female: $M = 3.336$]. The same difference was also observed in Czech and Slovak samples.

Summarizing the findings concerning quantitative differences between male and female respondents, we found that women, in contrast to men, display significantly higher levels of identification with Europe and the EU in three out of four indicators; they rate more highly the importance of their gender for themselves, they are less gender stereotyped, and they are more interested in issues of gender equality. However, the above mentioned sex differences are more pronounced in the gender related items than in the European identity related items.

3. Correlation analysis

The correlation analysis showed a consistent positive correlation between the importance of gender for the overall identity and the four indicators of European identity in male as well as in female respondents. The only difference between males and females concerns the non-significance of the correlation between *the importance of gender* and the *frequency of thinking of self as of a European citizen* in male respondents (Table 4). Although these correlations are relatively weak, they are highly significant.

Table 4: **Pearson correlations between European identity variables, gender identity, gender stereotyping variables and interest in equality between sexes – male sample (N = 1916)**

Q710 Importance EU citizen	-.035 (N=1467)	-.093** (N=1461)	-.076** (N=1463)	.030 (N=1860)	.189** (N=1852)	.255** (N=1846)	.425** (N=1344)	.487** (N=1847)	.361** (N=1427)	1 (N=1874)
Q70A European Citizen	.056* (N=1451)	.108** (N=1445)	.154** (N=1447)	.190** (N=1449)	.017 (N=1436)	.079** (N=1433)	.372** (N=1327)	.454** (N=1436)	1 (N=1461)	
Q68C Feeling of being European	-.012 (N=1475)	-.024 (N=1472)	-.030 (N=1472)	.051* (N=1872)	.118** (N=1855)	.199** (N=1849)	.472** (N=1347)	1 (N=1885)		
Q7F Attachment to Europe	.056* (N=1364)	.047 (N=1361)	-.017 (N=1361)	.092** (N=1363)	.066* (N=1350)	.169** (N=1342)	1 (N=1371)			
Q71J Sexuality/ Sexual orientation	-.043 (N=1474)	-.063* (N=1469)	-.138** (N=1470)	.032 (N=1861)	.397** (N=1855)	1 (N=1874)				
Q71B Gender	-.095** (N=1479)	-.121** (N=1474)	-.163** (N=1476)	-.072** (N=1867)	1 (N=1882)					
Q48E Equality between the sexes	.307** (N=1489)	.283** (N=1485)	.248** (N=1487)	1 (N=1900)						
REV37C Traditional earner/care division	.200** (N=1495)	.395** (N=1492)	1 (N=1500)							
Q37B Equal child care	.284** (N=1494)	1 (N=1498)								
Q37A All jobs done equally well by men & women	1 (N=1504)									
Items	Q37A	Q37B	REV37C	Q48E	Q71B	Q71J	Q7F	Q68C	Q70A	Q710

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

The *importance of gender* for the overall identity is significantly linked to the degree of *gender stereotypicality* in males through all the three indicators of gender stereotypes, but in females only for the “job competence” stereotype (Tables 4, 5).

Furthermore, the *importance of gender* for the overall identity is in a significant and sex-interactive relationship with the “*interest in gender equality*”: for males this correlation is negative, for females positive (Tables 4, 5). Thus, an increase in the importance of gender identity in males may be accompanied by a decrease in their interest in the gender issues, whereas an increase in the importance of gender identity in females may be accompanied by an increase in their interest in gender issues.

Finally, the extent of *gender non-stereotypicality* (agreeing with gender non-stereotypical items and disagreeing with the gender stereotypical item) is positively correlated with the *interest in the issues of gender equality* in both male and female respondents (Tables 4, 5).

Thus we may suggest a “correlation scheme” according to which one may assume that the higher a person's gender identity: (1) the stronger his/her European identity, (2) the higher her and the lower his interest in gender equality and (3) the higher his/her gender stereotypicality (for women concerning only job competence stereotype)⁸. Also, the more gender stereotyped a person is, the less interest s/he shows in

⁸ The correlations reported in Tables 4 and 5 are negative because, as already mentioned, the more strongly one agrees with the first two statements and the more strongly one disagrees with the third statement, the less s/he is gender stereotyped. However, if we reverse the signs, we can hypothesise a positive relationship between the degree of importance of gender identity and the degree of gender stereotypicality.

with the focus on the subjective meanings of the gender identity, on the equality in civic rights and duties between men and women in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, the perception of the influence of sex/gender on the career choice, and various constructions of European identity.

4.1 Gender identity (If reborn, would you like to be a man or a woman?)

Some male respondents claim it would not matter which sex they would have if reborn, however, they think they would be “different” if reborn as a woman. For some respondents their “inner life satisfaction” (Matej-Prague-male), “principles” they endorse (Ema-Prague-female) and their “education” are more important than their sex:

“I don’t know, I don’t think that the quality of one’s life depends on his/her sex, it depends more on his or her education, I think...it’s quite a silly criterion... whether it is a man or a woman.” (Michal-Bratislava-male)

The preference to keep one's sex if reborn is the most frequent, yielding the biggest variety of personal accounts (Table 6):

Reasons for being reborn as the other sex concentrate around curiosity (Jiří and Vít -Prague-males), the wish to “experience something different” (Tamara-Bratislava-female) or to test whether “men and women have really different ways of seeing things” (Lucia-Bratislava-female). Female curiosity may be moderated by an explicit wish to be a mother:

“Sometimes, I would like to try how it feels to be a man, not just for one day, because it would have to be a very heterogeneous day to experience everything... but I want to be a mother... Maybe, if I was born as a man, I would like to be a father, but it is about something else [laugh].” (Nina-Bratislava-female)

Specific obligations concerning the family are seen as potentially attractive for both male and female respondents:

“Because I’m curious, maybe also because a man has different duties and a woman has different duties (...) it would be interesting and, maybe, also nice, if I could also be a woman sometimes ... Especially concerning the family those duties would be a little bit different, but I think that only concerning the family, but otherwise, I think that a man and a woman should live in the same way.” (Ján-Bratislava-male)

“The father is scarcer to children and therefore they like him more, he can make money. (...) But I feel well as a woman and don’t complain of being a woman.” (Mária-Bratislava-female)

Table 6: Comparison of arguments for being reborn as a man/woman again

Men	Women
- Satisfied with being a man; knows what it means. (Tomáš-Prague) “I’m identified with that gender role.” (Kryštof-Prague) “...but once you are born you have no choice.”(Fero-Brat.)	- Satisfied with being a woman; knows what it means. (Nad’a-Brat, Alžběta-Prague, Lucia-Brat., Jiřina-Prague) “I like being a woman”. (Dita-Prague) “I have more fun in life”. (Kateřina-Prague) “It is more natural for me”. (Monika-Brat.)
- Would be thinking in a different way, - “I would think differently if I was a woman... I feel fine about being a man.” (Milan-Prague)	- Would be thinking in a different way. (Dana-Prague) “I have a feeling that men are rather so straight... they know exactly, what they want... I prefer the other. Such as I don’t know exactly what I want...” (Zuzana-Brat.)
- Life easier for men (Kryštof-Prague) because: “They do not have to bear the child”. (Martin-Brat.) “Perhaps, I would have to prove many times many of those things, which are so automatically assigned to man.”(Rado-Brat.) “Women have more somatic problems...” (Michal-Brat.) BUT: “...It is expected that a man will be the head of the family and he will feed the family.” (Arnošt-Prague)	- Life easier for women because: “Their needs are taken in consideration more than those of men.” (Karolína-Brat.)
	“Women are more resistant, more capable, and better equipped for life than men.” (Ružena-Prague)
	- Wants to give birth to children “I don’t want to abandon my career, stay at home and care after the children, but female emancipation has some limits.” (Anna-Prague)
“I cannot imagine having a boyfriend (laughs). (Maroš-Brat.)	
“Not because women are somehow discriminated (...) maybe, partly in salary or because of the maternity leave. (...) It is also understandable, that discrimination... but it isn’t like women in Arabic	

countries or something..." (Andrej-Brat.)	
"I'm bothered by the <i>intellectual barrier</i> between men and women (men cleverer)". (Peter-Brat.)	
"I also think that <i>this particular school</i> (technical university) <i>would not suit me</i> well, if I were a girl." (Michal-Brat.)	

Finally, one woman would like to be reborn as man, because of the greater freedom men have in their choices and decision-making:

"I think men are much freer than women. A woman gives birth to children and simply stays with them, but a man has more possibilities to make a decision. (...) When I was a child I always wanted to be a boy because everything was easier for boys and I did not like to wear a skirt." (Alice-Prague-female)

4.2 Equality in civic rights and duties for men and women in Slovakia and the Czech Republic

When asked about equality of rights and duties for women and men, gender equality is underscored and approved by respondents in both cities, and of both sexes. Some, however, both male and female, point out the tension between formal equality of rights and the reality of discrimination concerning mainly women's careers and salaries, but also the under-representation of women in politics:

"At the formal level there are no differences in rights for men and women, but in practice women have lower salaries than men and are asked whether they have children when applying for a job. But it depends on the people, on the way they were brought up and how they behave towards women." (Alžběta-Prague-female)

"Officially there are no differences in rights and duties for men and women, but in practical life I see them all the time. For example, in politics there are more men than women. I don't know whether it is because women have a more difficult position there or because they don't want to go there, it must be for both reasons." (Tomáš-Prague-male)

Men and women in Bratislava and Prague are seen as more equal in their rights than men and women in the "countryside":

"Women in Prague are more ambitious than in the countryside. In the villages men and women are still not seen as equal. (...) And the women just try to create a family, have children and so, but it is a bit different in Prague." (Kamila-Prague-female)

However, traditional gender role division (considered as natural) may be used to support discrimination against women:

"I think for a woman it is more difficult to get a top position in a firm than for a man. It is because men think that women cannot manage it, but also because of the family and children. When a woman has children, it is better to have a man on such a position, because the woman stays at home with the kids while the man does not. (...) I approve of it because I think it is natural." (Kateřina-Prague-female)

Negative perception of traditional role division (male breadwinner/female looking after children) as well as the strong presence of negative stereotypes of the opposite sex in Czech society are mitigated in comparison with extremely gendered cultures:

"Young people in the Czech Republic often say how terrible the opposite sex is, but I did not experience this in other countries I visited (...) On the other hand, I'm happy about not being born in Japan or Iran, where the position of women is even more complicated. I hope this situation will improve when the Czech Republic will be in the EU, probably because of different quotas, etc." (Adriana-Prague-female)

Another view is a scepticism concerning the practice of women's rights caused by overriding male dominance in partner relationships and disapproval of female "obedience":

"They [rights and duties] should be equal for men and women... Although some men interpret them differently, because they think they are the superior race (...) some men really prefer this kind of woman that obeys everything they say. That kind of relationship would not work for me...because a relationship is about harmony of people having equal rights." (Nina-Bratislava-female)

According to some, it is the role of the state to ensure equality, and if it does not "it does not fulfil its duties" (Kryštof-Prague-male). According to others, the decisive part of the responsibility is attributed to the individual woman:

"I think it depends on every woman how she builds her position." (Adriana and Dana-Prague-females)

Besides these opinions widely shared in general discourse, some women acknowledge that men are also discriminated against in some particular spheres of life, such as access to children after divorce:

"Simply that they are discriminated in the child rearing...and when they get divorced, it's mostly the woman who gets the child... I personally don't have a feeling of being somehow discriminated against because I am a woman. I've never experienced it." (Anna-Prague-female)

The differences between men's and women's rights and duties can also be recognized as a matter of fact, without being perceived as discrimination:

"... Are different, because the military service is compulsory for men, and a man does not get 10,000 Czech Crowns after the birth of the child, or the financial contribution to the hormonal contraception." (Dana-Prague-female)

4.3 Influence of sex/gender on study subject and/or career

"Well, in my opinion, everything in my life is affected by the fact that I am a man."

[I: ?] *Well, in the way I am thinking and so. I don't know whether specifically the fact that I will go to work in the Netherlands is affected by the fact that I am a man, but my thinking in general is affected by this fact. Male and female ways of thinking are quite different."* (Matúš-Bratislava-male)

Even though there are individual opinions about distinctions between male and female "ways of thinking" influencing the decision on study subject/career choice, the majority of respondents (both male and female) perceive their career choice as independent of their sex/gender. However, the decisions about the choice of some particular professions (e.g., medicine) as inappropriate for women submit to stereotypes transmitted by the primary family (Kamila-Prague-female, Arnošt-Prague-male).

The reproductive aspect is again present in the context of career plans (Jiří-Prague-male, Daniel-Bratislava-male):

"It is me who will have to care for the child for 3 years, to leave my job and then to have difficulties coming back into professional life." (Simona-Prague-female)

However, nowadays this issue can be perceived more as a challenge than as an obstacle:

"If I were a woman, I would have to take into account motherhood, but I think that nowadays it shouldn't be a problem. I would like to harmonize work duties with the role of father." (Fero-Bratislava-male)

4.4 European or other supranational or trans-national identities

The respondents were also asked whether they have ever felt or have thought of themselves as European. Reasons for and against the feeling of being European that emerged from thematic content analysis of the in-depth interviews fall under two broad dimensions: **content** of European identity and **processes** of the emergence of a European identity. Each of these dimensions can be further divided into several categories.

The content may be "empty", defined through a particular comparative context (e.g., the European *way of life* is different from the American *way of life*) or "autonomous" from the comparative context. The "autonomous" content-related categories are: "being European" as simple territorial belonging, "being European" as (multi) cultural identity and "being European" as political identity.

The process-related categories concern the *contexts when* and the *ways in which* European identity is elicited, mainly in comparison with other Europeans, in comparison with the USA, and in comparison with "non-Western" cultures. In these contrasting situations the accentuation of similarities with other Europeans and of differences between Europeans and non-Europeans takes place, as predicted by the theory of social identity and self-categorization theory (Tajfel, H. – Turner, J. C., 1986).

When looking for sex differences in these conceptualisations of European identity, we had to recognize that no systematic sex differences in the above-mentioned categories of European identity could be found. However, some gender aspects of European identity occurred spontaneously in several respondents' statements when asked about *what Europe means for them*. In some of these statements, Europe was favoured for its gender equality in comparison to Muslim societies, and the USA was mentioned as a reference country for optimal gender relationships. The statements concerning the gender equality aspect of Europe come from both male and female respondents:

"I'm satisfied to be born as a white man in Europe and not as a black woman in Africa, because my life would be much more difficult." (Matej-Prague-male)

"Well, I rather think that these [European] countries have an entirely different way of thinking from Iraq, Iran, Kuwait... Egypt, Libya... For instance, the position of women is completely different in Europe, as far as I know, in Iraq, Kuwait and Syria ... women must wear a veil, not over here, rather the opposite (smile) in the summer... Basically, a different way of thinking..." (Karol-Bratislava-male)

"I have never been to Turkey, but I heard and read something about it... and I know there is a different religion... and I would say that in the countries which are here [in Europe] people are equal. Men-women, the same rights...or similar rights... But it is not the case in Turkey. (...) I simply think Turkey does not belong there." (Kamila-Prague female)

"I feel European because I feel equal to men. In other countries except for Europe and America, women are subordinated to men. (...) There is a film 'I won't leave without my daughter' I felt really sorry for that lady

(...) *In the film, she went to an Arabic country and there they took her daughter away from her and her husband was allowed to decide about everything. It is as if there was a boundary; a woman has some rights here [in Europe] and there it is only for men. That's when I realized how happy I am to be here.*" (Lenka-Bratislava-female)

"They [Turkey] are different by their religious way of life and it greatly influences the life there, it is reflected there... in the legal system, the position of a woman... (...) We the Europeans are still like that, I would say that Americans are so emancipated, these women are like, they are equal – a woman and a man, in Europe it is going in that direction, but women are not completely emancipated as in America." (Romana-Bratislava-female)

Discussion

In this study, we were interested in sex differences in European identity indicators, sex differences in gender identity and gender stereotypicality, and in the interest in issues of gender equality. To examine these, we analysed the data gathered in a survey with 3890 respondents aged 18-24 from ten European cities/regions, including Edinburgh and Manchester (the UK), Madrid and Bilbao (Spain), Bielefeld and Chemnitz (Germany), Vienna and the Bregenz area of Vorarlberg (Austria) and Prague (Czech Republic) and Bratislava (Slovak Republic). These quantitative data were completed with the analysis of 51 qualitative interviews carried out in Bratislava and Prague.

The quantitative results revealed a consistent "dominance" of female respondents in three out of four indicators of European identity in the whole sample comprising respondents from all the studied cities/regions. Correlation analysis showed the existence of a positive relationship between the measures of European identity and of gender identity, slightly more strongly in women than in men. The existence of the relationship (although not particularly strong) between these identities may have two causes. First, neither gender nor European identities belong to the most important sources of personal identity. Second, we may hypothesize the existence of a link between the "supra-national" nature of European identity and the "supra-individual" level of gender identity (as belonging to a very broad pool of half of the world's population), both being inclusive categories subsuming other less inclusive identifications, although of very different natures.

In order to identify possible explanations for this pattern of results, we explored the qualitative material provided by in-depth interviews with Czech and Slovak respondents. In these qualitative data, the gender aspect of European identity did not take the form of systematic differences between males and females in conceptualisations of European identity. However, the gender – in particular the gender equality – was thematised by some females as well as males as being one of the key elements in their representation of what Europe means. Europe was favoured for its gender equality in comparison to Muslim societies, while the USA was mentioned as a reference country for optimal gender relationships.

Unfortunately, in spite of their richness, these qualitative data do not provide sufficient evidence for explaining the significantly higher identification with Europe in women in the survey. While the quantitative results express differences in the strength of the identification with particular European identity indicators they do not provide sufficient knowledge about their subjective meaning for the respondents; the qualitative interviews cannot "measure" the intensity of identification with the particular conceptualisations, which proved to be similar for men and for women.

Even though in some interviews Europe was thematised as a "gender just" environment as compared with other cultures, the everyday reality of coexistence of men and women in European countries still seems to be far from optimal. As Jamieson describes it: Although the evidence suggests most individuals now approach couple relationships with expectations which include mutual emotional support and treating each other like equals, this tells us relatively little concerning how people actually behave towards each other. Empirically, intimacy and inequality continue to coexist in many personal lives. Personal relationships remain highly gendered. Men and women routinely both invoke gender stereotypes or turn a convenient blind eye to gendering processes when making sense of themselves as lovers, partners, mothers, fathers and friends... I note that the creative energies of many social actors are still engaged in coping with or actively sustaining old inequalities rather than transforming them" (Jamieson, L., 1999, p. 465).

Indeed, the opinions of our respondents concerning the equality of rights of men and women in Slovak and Czech societies expressed in the qualitative interviews also range from considering these rights as factually equal to the dichotomy of formal equality vs. the actual discrimination against women in career and salaries. The latter is approved by a few male and female respondents, but rejected by the majority. A specific female asset is that female gender awareness plays a decisive role in ensuring gender equality in practice. Although our respondents recognize that sex/gender stereotypes shared in society interfere with

career opportunities, the majority (both male and female) perceive their career choices as independent of their sex/gender. It should be noted here that few of our young respondents (aged 18-24) have personal experience with this kind of discrimination. Many explicitly say this is because they are students, have not started working yet, and have heard about the existence of discrimination only in the media or from their acquaintances. However, the frequent thematisation of this issue by the respondents from Prague and Bratislava indicates that this is a problem that is present in the public discourse in both societies.

In line with Jamieson (ibid) and with the findings mentioned above, we assume that the higher European identification of women in the quantitative survey might be an expression of their expectations of the EU concerning the fulfilment of “gender equality in practice” as suggested by one of the Prague female respondents (Adriana). This assumption is also supported by the finding that women – as compared with men – more strongly identify with their own gender, presumably due to a higher need for gender awareness caused by gender discrimination. Indeed, in the qualitative interviews, no woman (and no man) expressed dissatisfaction with their current sex, but the reasons for preferring one’s own sex in females focus rather on favouring their own gender’s qualities (e.g., giving birth), while males’ preferences rely on rejecting the other gender’s qualities.

Furthermore, there was a significant positive correlation country wide between gender identity and gender stereotypicality indicating that the more a person is identified with / aware of his/her gender, the more we can expect this person to maintain gender stereotypes. However, in women this holds only for the rejection of the statement *all jobs can be done equally well by men and women*, which, in fact, is “the softest” of the proposed statements. Thus, the issue of gender stereotypicality can be considered as predominantly a “male problem”, which is also confirmed by the huge dominance of males in agreeing with all relevant gender stereotype indicators. This suggests that for men the vision of masculinity is still linked to the traditional ideas about the male-female distribution of roles in society.

Finally, our finding that there is a negative correlation between the importance of gender identity and the interest in issues of gender equality in males, but positive correlation in females, only supports all that was found about gender issues in this data.

These findings might lead to a scepticism concerning “soft” strategies for overcoming a gender stereotyped social system. In other words, it seems that due to the sex differences in the patterns of mutual relationships between gender identity, gender stereotypicality and interest in gender equality, a mere raising of gender awareness is not sufficient for the overcoming of sex/gender inequalities, and positive action and active political decisions are required. Thus, the policy of gender mainstreaming of the European Commission takes on an even more important role.

Conclusion

The results of this study suggest that the strengthening of European identity may be accompanied by the strengthening of gender identity. In young European males, however, this process may go along with an increase in gender stereotypicality on the one hand, and the decrease in interest in gender equality on the other hand, leading to an “opening of the scissors” between males and females. While these tentative conclusions need to be taken with extreme caution and must be further tested, we should keep in mind Plummer’s call for transformation of gender and identity narratives in order to adjust to the current multiple transformations including gender, sexuality, values, religions, morals as well as national and supra-national identities.

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