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# GENDER STEREOTYPES OF THE METALLURGICAL MONOTOWN

R. R. Vakhitov<sup>1</sup>, O. P. Stepanova<sup>1</sup>, D. A. Khabibulin<sup>1</sup>, A. P. Merezchnikov<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup> *Nosov Magnitogorsk state technical university (Magnitogorsk, Russia)**E-mail: vakhitov-roman@yandex.ru*


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## AUTHOR'S INFO

**R. R. Vakhitov**, Cand. Ped., Associate Prof., Chair of Sport Development,  
**O. P. Stepanova**, Cand. Psych., Prof., Head of the Chair of Psychology,  
**D. A. Khabibulin**, Cand. Ped., Associate Prof., Chair of Psychology,  
**A. P. Merezchnikov**, Cand. Ped., Associate Prof., Chair of Psychology

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## ABSTRACT

Analysis of the features of demonstration of the gender stereotypes in the metallurgical monotown is presented. Such town is characterized by professional employment in the structure of industrial enterprises with shift systems of operation. The authors note the new phenomena of so-called “fragmental” employment, they analyze the features of relations of women and men to their profession, to job loss, to traditional family roles. A row of variations in the standards of gender interaction between men and women is revealed, the role of the new “displaced” types of emotional reaction of men and women on surrounding reality.

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## Introduction

Interaction between the people is building on the generally acknowledged behavior examples and corresponding culture. It can't pass without taking into account the regularities of social perception. Gender stereotypes can be recognized as one of the appearances of this social perception and at the same time its result [1]. Gender stereotypes are classified as the opinions about qualities, properties and standards of behavior for representatives of both genders, and these opinions are culturally and socially stipulated. They simplify the real situation, however, they are strictly fixed in collective public consciousness and they vary rather slowly.

At present time “gender” is identified by E. Giddens, the British sociologist: “Gender is not physical differences between a man and a woman, but it is a complex of the features of masculinity and femininity that are socially formed” [2]. First of all, gender is presented by social expectations regarding behavior considering as corresponding for men and women. Gender is forming by society as a social model of women and men, determining their behavior and their role in behavior and its institutes (family, political structure, economics, culture, education etc.). Gender role is a form of behavior that is estimated by society as acceptable and normal for men and women. Moral values, social regulations and ideas have the effect on gender roles. These roles are forming by religion, culture and economics.

History of humanity can be divided into two periods from the economical point of view. The first period includes adaption of human beings to the varying surrounding conditions and social forms of habit of life, provided by Darwin natural selection. The second period presents the phase when natural selection could not correspond to strongly accelerated speed of social changes. This period had started approximately 20,000 years ago and, as a result, a human being as a biological being has been “preserved” on the stage with life conditions of a primitive tribe. Respectively, the gender

roles meeting the requirements of these conditions, are put in a human being biologically. Thus, a man is a hunter and warrior, courageous, aggressive, strong, hazardous, able to be a leader and quick in decisions. At the same time, a woman is a child minder, home keeper, feminine, merciful and mild.

At present time we observe the quick social evolution, supporting domination of genuine masculine skills in a human being as a social being, instead of the slow biological evolution. The modern society is characterized by shift of gender roles, because the social roles of men and women are transforming essentially, though the tradition roles still prevail in the most part of Russia. Women increase their participation in policy, business and even in defence and security agencies. Quantity of the social roles realizing by women during the XX century has increased many times. At the same time men expand their social roles rather scarcely, however, they are also touched by changes. E.g., men expand substantially their emotional, personal space, what can cause any softening of qualification criteria of a “real man”. So-called “crying men”, men with salaries less than women have, or “home-keeping men” can't astonish anybody today.

Multiple investigations have frequently marked the gender problems that can't be denied also at present time [3–6]. Of course, they were expressed not so brightly in the beginning of the XXI century, than during previous historical periods (when direct and even physical humiliation of women was “approved”) [7]. But even today the world can't completely overcome inequality of genders during social development, in spite of the multiple efforts of equality libertarians, different trade union, feminine and suffragist movements, many funds and educational public initiatives [8].

Difficulties in career progress for women with children, inequality of salaries for men and women with similar skills, difference in perception of male and female statuses in the conditions of not registered marriage relations etc. are the well-known problems [9].

It seems that the age-long traditions in perception of a woman as subordinated and subdued being are still alive, be-

cause such forms and examples of gender roles and behavior are set by families. A modern Russian family still retranslates female mildness, compliance, carefulness, commitment to home and children, and even self-sacrifice of different kinds, as well as male aggression, domination and orientation to external interaction [10].

However, we can see today also some changes in the standards of gender interaction [11–13]. The authors estimate their appearances through the prism of examination in the conditions of Magnitogorsk metallurgical monotown.

Magnitogorsk is a second large town (since 1931) in Chelyabinsk region and one of the largest global centers of the iron and steel industry. Magnitogorsk iron and steel works (MMK) is a town-forming enterprise. The town population counts about 418,000 inhabitants, and approximately 50% of them are employed in metallurgy and machine-building.

### Material and technique of the investigations

Comparative method was used in the work as the main method of investigation. It allows to examine similarities and differences between the appearances or their classes; it is used also for reveal of classifications and typologies of social appearances and for checking of hypotheses about occasional relations via examination of the empiric relations and temporal sequence of factors.

Information was obtained in the process of direct communication between the researcher and respondents, questionnaire survey and testing.

The following techniques were used:

Spilberger-Khanin feedback form for differential measurement of anxiety as a state (situational anxiety) and as a personal quality (personal anxiety);

Graduation dial for psychologist diagnostics of neurotization level, developed in the clinical psychology laboratory of the Bekhterev psychoneurologic institute, and questionnaire survey for reveal of expression degree of personal neurotization.

584 persons (311 women and 273 men) participated in this investigation. Selection of respondents was randomized and it was formed in strict correspondence with the scientific principles and rules of random selection (i.e. the general aggregate strictly divided to selection units and then the tested person were randomly selected).

### Obtained results and their discussion

This investigation includes several variations of gender stereotypes in Magnitogorsk as a metallurgical monotown.

#### The first stereotype is rather more men's involvement in child guidance.

Traditionally child minding in a Russian family is a women's function. The variants with equal tutorship of living together with father are rather seldom after divorce. Such situation can take place usually in the case of mother total alcoholization or narcotic addiction. The family that avoids divorce also relies mainly on a woman [14].

The inquiry includes 96 nursery teachers from 27 infant schools located in the different Magnitogorsk regions. It is shown that men take their children from infant school rather more frequently (comparing with the inquiry conducted 10 years ago). This result was verified by 97% of respondents. The nursery teachers note that 10 years ago a father permanently taking his child was a rare appearance, but at present time 3–5 fathers in each group bear this responsibility almost completely. At the same time mothers or grannies help such father in this matter very seldom — not more than 1–2 times per month. The teachers testify that they observe the families with only nominal mother “existence” in documents; nobody did see her personally in an infant school.

The causes of such family behavior were examined during the questionnaire survey for above-mentioned parents. Fathers aged from 23 to 38 years constituted the most part (63%) of 273 male respondents. The following causes were named for active involvement of these parents in the process of child minding: necessity of usage of personal automotive transport for moving along the distance “house — nursery school” (35%); rather early beginning of mother's working day and relatively flexible working schedule (or more late beginning) of father's working day (47%); necessity of child accompanying to additional study groups in the evening, required father participation (13%); simple understanding and agreement between the parents (5%).

It was revealed during the investigation that 81% of such “permanently acting” fathers have displayed this mode of behavior for the second or third child; it displays on their formed readiness to be more involved fathers and can be considered as a very interesting fact from the point of view of fatherhood psychology. 17% of respondents realized this family function owing to late pregnancy or baby care of their wives. 2% of fathers in this group have families with many children.

#### The next gender feature in the metallurgical monotown is considered as elimination of differences in emotionality.

It is interesting that the previous reference on a working schedule and difficulties of labour structure in a town with the large part of population employed at the industrial works is also evident and can principally explain the phenomena of lowering of female emotional appearances in combination with the high level of anxiety and personal tension. Standard five-day week is practically absent in the structures of industrial enterprises, except only a small (and permanently decreasing) group of office employees. So-called “railroad” schedule and “four-shift” schedule, the most hard for people are mostly used. Four-day watches with one holiday are accompanied by completely violated sleeping regime and have unfavorable effect on balancing of biorhythms in female nature. Thereby the fact of permanent growth of female morbidity for urban women seems not very surprising. Bad ecology makes its definitive input in this sad statistics. However, the role of stresses should not be underestimated, taking into account the fact that hormone imbalances are directly connected with lack of sleep and biologically incorrect sleeping schedules. The above-mentioned facts provoke emotional imbalance from disinhibition of emotions and their excessive

appearances in family relations to retardation and excessive suppression of natural emotionality in professional medium. The women that use to hide their emotions during the work are mostly liable to retardation.

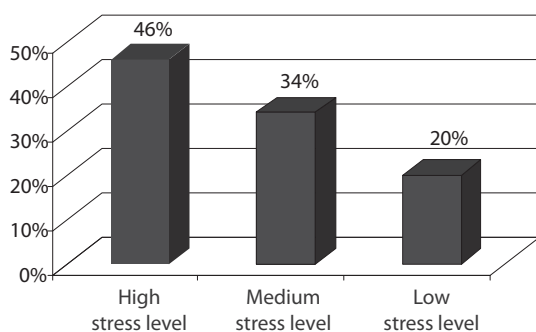
It is important that a woman should be able to suppress her feelings and emotions, to overcome sharp and quick stress reactions at the industrial enterprise where men occupy more than 90% of leading positions. It is also necessary because a woman can't give loose to feelings, tears and discussion about the problem as typical female reactions in production conditions. She have to interrupt the emotional stream in order to be able in the next similar stress moment to choose and realize the important technical and dispatching action, to take the immediate and responsible correct decision. There is no time for emotions, or no place for their appearance, and thereby emotions are pushed inside.

It should be also taken into account that the most part of industrial enterprises is located in the distant, left-bank town part, and the time of transportation there takes 1.0–1.5 hours at least. Based on these facts, we have to imagine that there is an expressed female group in a modern metallurgical monotown that must start the working day at 5 a.m. approximately. It is connected with chronic lack of sleep and, respectively, to emotional depletion of women. Affirmation of increased female asthenization is evident on this background. Not-reacted conflict also arises internal stress with additional invalidization of a modern female inhabitant of a metallurgical monotown.

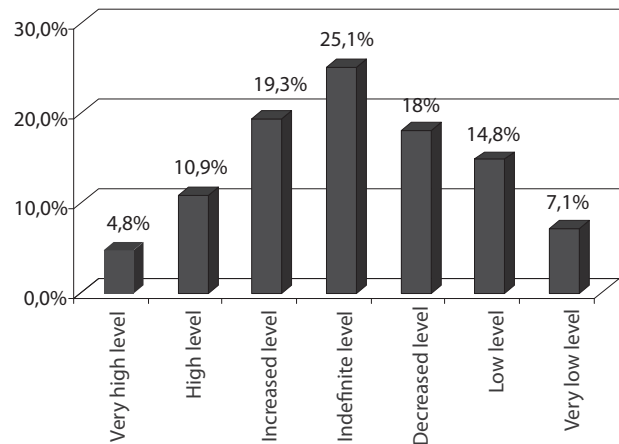
Measurement of stress and neurotization level was undertaken for the women employed at production sites, in order to confirm the above-mentioned conclusions. The obtained results are distributed in the following way: high, medium and low stress levels were displayed for 46, 34 and 20% of women respectively (see **fig. 1**).

Examination of female neurotization level (state of emotional non-stability that can lead to neurosis and neurotic tendency in personal behavior) displayed the following distribution: very high — 4.8%, high — 10.9%, increased — 19.3%, indefinite — 25.1%, decreased — 18.0%, low — 14.8%, very low — 7/1% (see **fig. 2**).

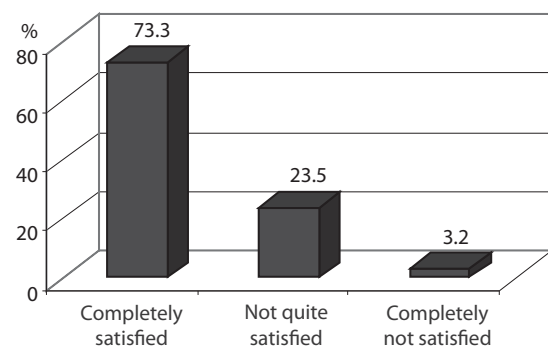
Examination of the satisfaction level for different working aspects among the women employed at production sites has shown that 73.3% are completely satisfied, 23.5% are



**Fig. 1. Parameters of the stress level expression for the women employed at production sites**



**Fig. 2. Parameters of the neurotization level expression for the women employed at production sites**



**Fig. 3. Parameters of the satisfaction level for working conditions among the women employed at production sites**

not quite satisfied and 3.2% are completely not satisfied (see **fig. 3**).

The opened question “What is the cause of feeling stress during the work?” was used for study of the main stress “stimulators” in the field of satisfaction of different working aspects. It was suggested to name three most important causes of anxiety and stress. Analytical interpretation of answers allowed to reveal several standard and often mentioned answers.

Fear of layoff and unemployment was mentioned as the cause of stress by 28% of female respondents. This fact is especially important at present day, when situation with working places is still problematic. Unemployment is considered by many people as an awful trial, leading to mandatory deterioration of life quality. Search of work is also a stress today because the labour market requires mostly those employees who are ready to abdicate from working legalization in accordance to the Labour Code, to work overtime, to agree with unilateral concessions to the benefit of employer. Meeting such market requirements is rather problematic for a woman who is also busy in household, in child care and education.

43% of female respondents marked unfavourable working conditions together with their hardness, dirtiness and redundancy as stress factors, and only 3% of responding women named impossibility of feeling themselves beautiful and attractive as such factor.

It should be noted that additional question “What can be a compensation for you?” (or “What can reconcile you with such circumstances?”) displayed the following distribution of articles (the question includes possibility of choosing several answers from the suggested list).

98% of respondents named employment as the answer. Regular salary paid by employer was mentioned by 90%. Only 32% of participants consider their salary as high, while 57% thought it is acceptable (and they emphasized that this circumstance is a sufficient cause to continue this work). 33% of female respondents noted possibility of usage of social services at the enterprise. It is interesting that only 27% of women chose desire for self-realization in the work, though this tendency is discussed as a mass appearance. At last, 31% of participants have opinion that suitability of combined schedule of work and family life is quite serious cause for reconciliation with their work.

The last answer is very interesting, because the previous questionnaire survey of male respondents attracted our attention to the expressed reference (47%) of men who explained circumstances of family life by working schedule.

These features of unusual distribution of the gender roles in family in the metallurgical monotown needed additional examination, and it was realized in the individual conversations with those women who had chosen the answer about suitability of combined schedule of work and family life in their questionnaire. These women think that the shift schedule can free any working days and allows to make family matters, to visit schools, to talk to teachers, to visit out-patients clinic and municipal agencies (that provide services for registration of rights, documentation of benefits) as well as juridical and legal agencies regarding solving of civil disputes with larger comfort. They also emphasized possibility of additional salary based on the above-mentioned shift schedule. So, the days released at 12-hour “railroad” schedule can be used for any additional works. On the contrary, if the main work is structurally organized, it is impossible to combine it with the second work that is also structurally organized. Based on this understanding, women use actively so-called side job, a form of non-official employment. The list of such side jobs can include cleaning services, sewing, knitting, nail and hairdressing services at home, relatively cheap cosmetic repair services for dwellings. Only 27% of female respondents stated that all their free time is devoted to the family and children, while other women told that they are trying to improve financial state through additional salary.

Thus, all so-called shift working schedules are slightly distributed in large cities or scientific centers, but they are typical for industrial monotowns and they cause in Magnitogorsk origination of the unusual phenomena that can be called as phenomena of “fragmental employment”. People use the holidays (that were initially provided for rest and recovery) for earning of additional salaries, and it certainly won’t strengthen their psychical and somatic health, especially taking into account the fact that people are very tired in their main work. It is important that such employment is typical not only for women, but also for men. It is

interesting that these side jobs are often realized in the field that is quite different with the main work area.

More expressed petulance and exactingness to the new working place is noted for men, especially if their previously lost working position was rather high. This fact is contradiction to the traditional male role as a family breeder. It is also a phenomena of gender difference for the metallurgical monotown, where unemployment is connected with rather more serious problems than in a megalopolis.

The men demonstrate expecting behavior, they start to observe the map of professional migration. It is often connected with unwillingness to look for job and with acceptance of the fact that the wife bears the main financial load. It should not be noted again that the crisis varied seriously the professional map anywhere, and especially in a metallurgical monotown. There were not a lot of well-paid working places earlier, and now their number decreased additionally.

Behavior of the market players in this situation was different. From one side, there is a group of employees really required in the permanent income: they have no savings, they are burdened with regular financial obligations, they have social dependents. Such employees are forced to agree with any salary that can be less than lost salary by two and more times. The variant of such conciliatory agreement is also presented by the employees who have to agree for increase of their duties transferred from their fired colleagues.

The second group of so-called “rioters” who evaluate themselves very high didn’t agree with such suggestions about cutting of their salaries or increase of their duties. They quit their job and, to speak frankly, many of them made such step in temper, without careful evaluation of their forces and reserve of financial cushion.

Later they understand that they are unemployed and that the future job will not be so well-paid, high-status and interesting. It is quite surprising, but the men having a wife who is working or has a side-job, and even working and has a side-job at the same time, don’t display desire to start working immediately in order to save their reputation as family feeders. The higher is the social and professional status of a male unemployed person, the more capricious is he in talks with his spouse. He can start from claims that he supported her during baby care and finish with direct manipulations and deceptions regarding weakened health and waiting of the promised “good” job. False job search, regular visits to possible employers for interview without any results etc. can be mentioned as often mode of behavior in this connection.

Such person often conceals the fact of his unemployment from his friends and relatives, he displays himself as being in the “permanent search”, “in thoughts”, in “waiting of the offer” or as starting his own business. Of course, sometimes a man can realize himself in any new professional activity, but we can also mention unfavorable situations when so-called “family leader” starts to sublimate the negative tendencies of his employment attempts in alcohol abuse and gambling games.

The strict desire to demonstrate the sufficient level of financial prosperity is a real problem for Russian men in relatively small towns. Such families take on the new loans

in order to cover their current expenses, what of course does not help to stabilize the real psychological health. But such debt overburden shows also consuming obsession, because even the persons having rather low income can't imagine their life without high-status and expensive non-essential goods. In this connection the male auto-eroticism is more expressed and it is rather frightened tendency. And this fear concerns not only to "direct participants" of these processes, but also representatives of sociologic sciences who note the stronger tendency of female masculinity and male femininity. In general, it concern to the whole population.

### Conclusion

It can be stated that social-cultural, economical, ideological transformation of the society causes changes in the gender stereotypes of inhabitants of the metallurgical monoton. The gender stereotypes in the framework of this process determine the mechanism of personal identity reproduction and its adaptation to the varying cultural reality, as well as dynamics of the social-cultural development of the society. At past times we didn't think about "correctness" of these stereotypes, we simply accepted them, but now the problems of gender equality acquires more and more importance.

The present situation covers all strata of the society and is characterized by changes of the previously set stereotypes. Some people display the families and their problems as the main priorities, while others show that professional direction is the most important thing for them. Of course we can meet such persons who are able to combine harmonically the family interests, the work and the public activity.

The research displayed that necessity of attracting of additional income in a family causes the phenomena of "fragmental" employment in both men and women. The men are more often and more intensively (in comparison with other historical periods) busy in children care, in order to support their spouses in working effort, providing in such way the input in family prosperity and status. The men also show more rigidity in search of new job, mainly paying attention to its image and status; it allows to talk about strengthening of femininity in male character. The shift working schedule and high value of women employment as a source of family income leads to lowering of female emotionality accompanied with high level of anxiety and personal tension, to physical asthenization and growth of psychosomatic diseases.

Thereby it can be stated that gender division leads to restriction of development of both women and men. It finalizes in psychical tension because those who live and act in accordance with such stereotypes make violation upon themselves and don't allow their creative potential to be completely realized. Each person is individual, it has its own features and skills and thereby creation of productive, developing and harmonic society is the common aim for each of us, independently to gender affiliation.

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