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New meanings of the family: an European overview

Anália Torres; Rui Brites, Bernardo Coelho and Inês Cardoso

Previous and Ongoing Research Projects

Social Quality and Changing Relationships between Work, Care and Welfare in Europe (Workcare) – FP6 (ongoing, coord. by Claire Wallace)

Workpackage 4: “Orientations to Work and Care”

Workpackage 5: “Qualitative interviews with households”

Work, Family, Gender Equity and Social Policies: European transformations from a comparative perspective (ongoing)

Men and Women between Family and Work in Portugal (2000; 2004); Marital Life and Work (2004)

First European Quality of Life Survey: Time use and work-life options over the life course (2007)

The results presented here refer only to:

A part of the ongoing project “Mapping Orientations to Work and Care”

Analytical and methodological strategies

- To understand differences between countries regarding family-work issues we must account for **cultural, structural, institutional** contexts but also the dynamics of change in a specific country.
- To understand trends and configurations in each, and in all, countries, we must **mix methods**.
- Permanent dialogue between **different methods** and two **different analytical levels**:

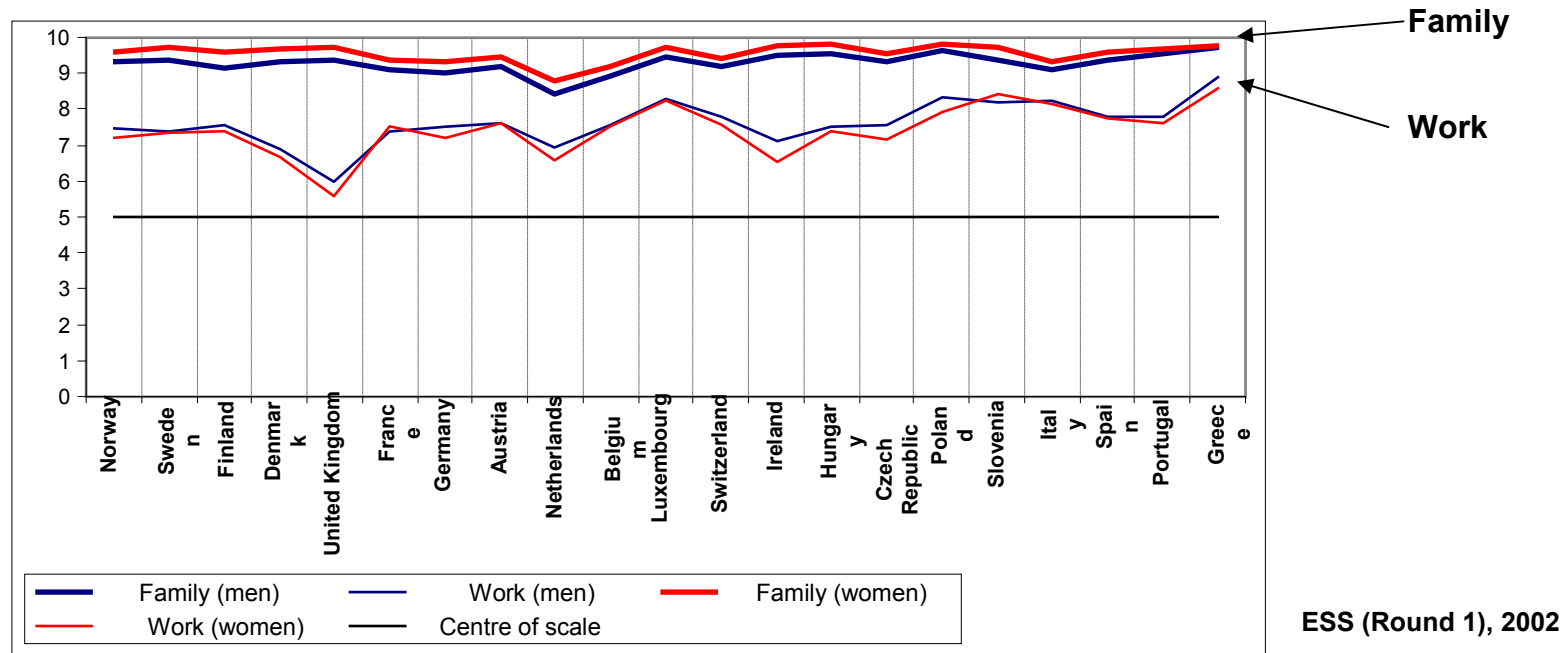
Quantitative Data	Qualitative Data
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ESS 2002• ESS 2004• EB 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• interviews held in Portugal in different regional and social contexts;• interviews in several countries Austria, UK, Italy, Denmark, Hungary, Portugal, Poland (on going Workcare project)

What do men and women want?

- Some authors claim that, regarding work and family, women choose a life style according to their preferences (Hakim's theory).
- Others (Crompton *et al*) have shown that structural, institutional and cultural constraints shape "preferences". Choices are though constrained.

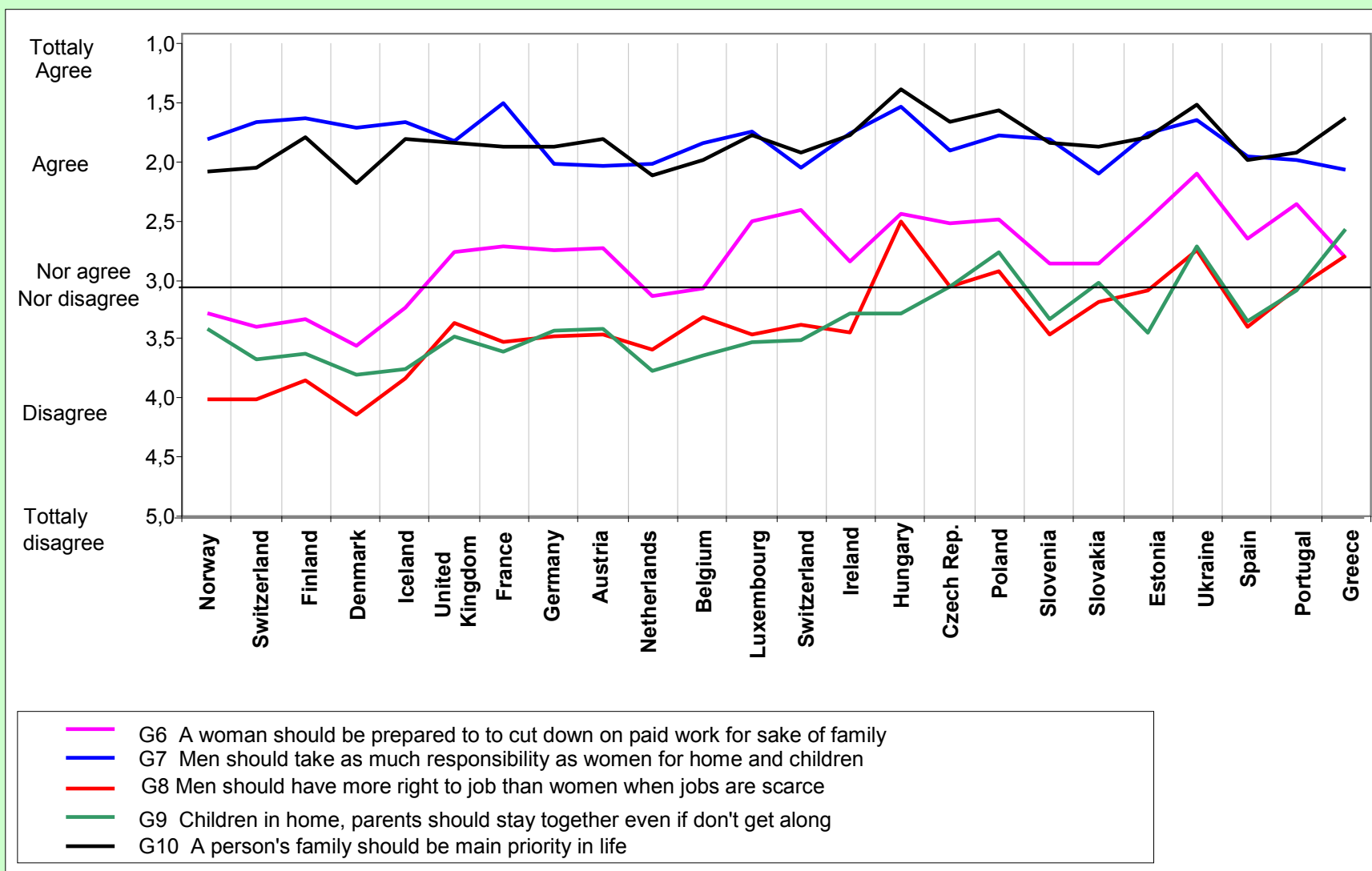
- **On previous research we have seen that:**
 - **Work and family are dimensions of social identity for both women and men. Women “prefer” to work professionally.**
 - **Both men and women desire a strong participation of men in family and childcare.**
- This means that we can find new meanings of the family:
 - How can we define these new meanings?
 - What feeds the emergence of these new meanings of the family?
 - How are those new meanings connected with structural and institutional conditions?
 - How the way of asking questions (quantitative or qualitative approaches) and the way we phrased them interfere in our interpretations and conclusions?

The importance of family and work in Europe



- **Contradicting the stereotypes:**
 - **Women tend to attribute the same importance to work as men do.**
 - **Work is a value in itself, making part of a feminine social identity, even in countries where there is a lower participation of women in the labour market.**
- **The discrepancies between the sexes are far narrower than the differences between countries.**
 - **For men too family is important.**

New meanings of the family in Europe

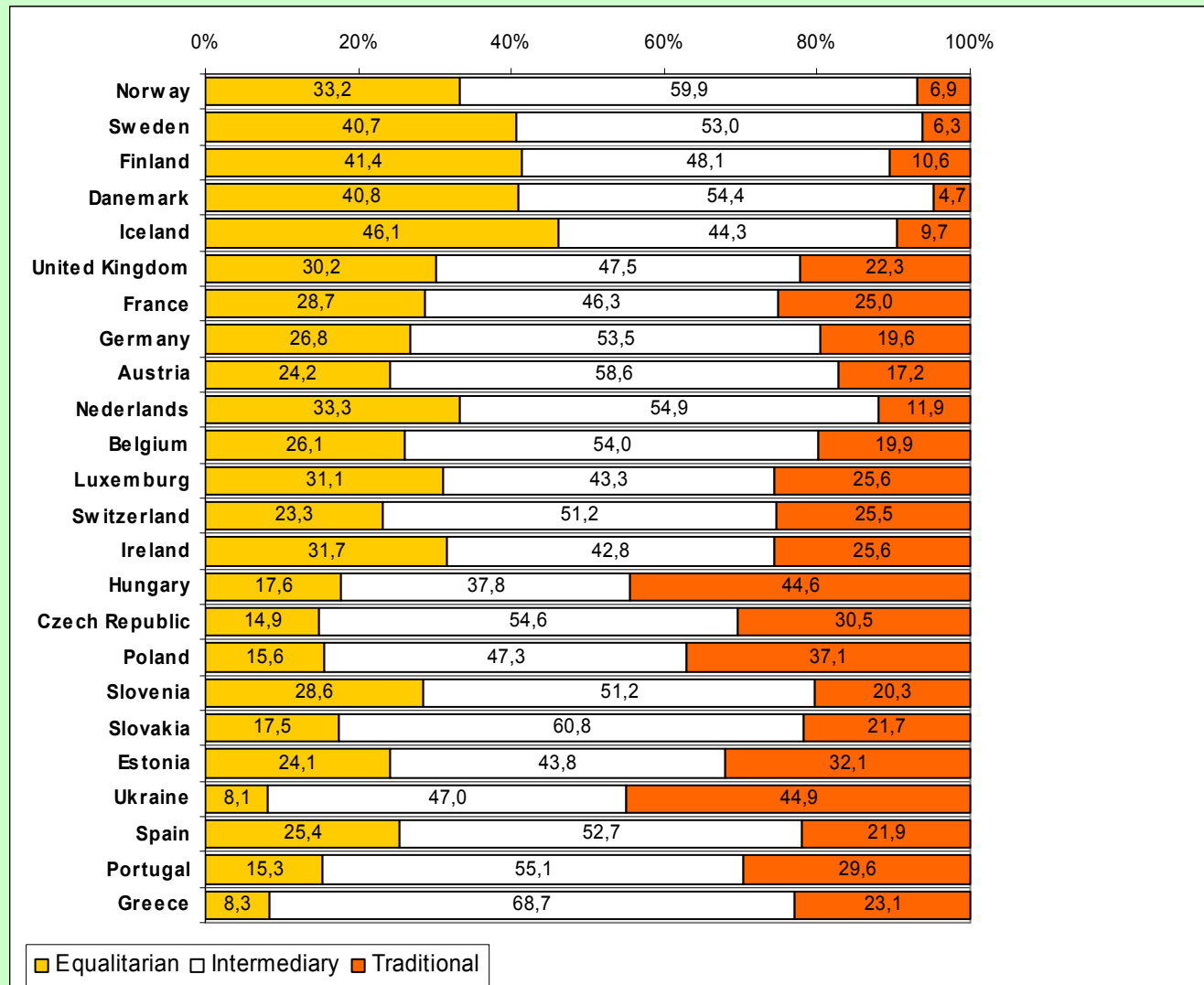


ESS (Round 2), 2004

European Patterns

- **General consensus and very high agreement about:**
 - **A person's family should be main priority in life**
 - **Men should take as much responsibility as women for home and children**
 - New meanings of the family.
 - Egalitarian perspective and rejection of a traditional division of men and women's roles in the family.
- **Intermediary (undefined) positions:**
 - **A woman should be prepared to cut down on paid work for sake of family's well-being.**
 - 47% of the European agree.
 - Marked differences among countries. Scandinavian tend to reject but the majority is near the middle or undefined point (nor agree nor disagree), and some tend to the agreement.
- **Rejection:**
 - **Men should have more right to job than women when jobs are scarce.**
 - **Children in home, parents should stay together even if don't get along.**
 - The sacrifice of the female professional work in favour of men is rejected by the majority (52,9%).
 - The idea of the indissolubility of marriage due to the existence of children is also, globally, rejected (52,2%).
 - Distinction between countries: Scandinavian express a much clear position (of rejection), while the others have more difficulty in standing for or against the statements.

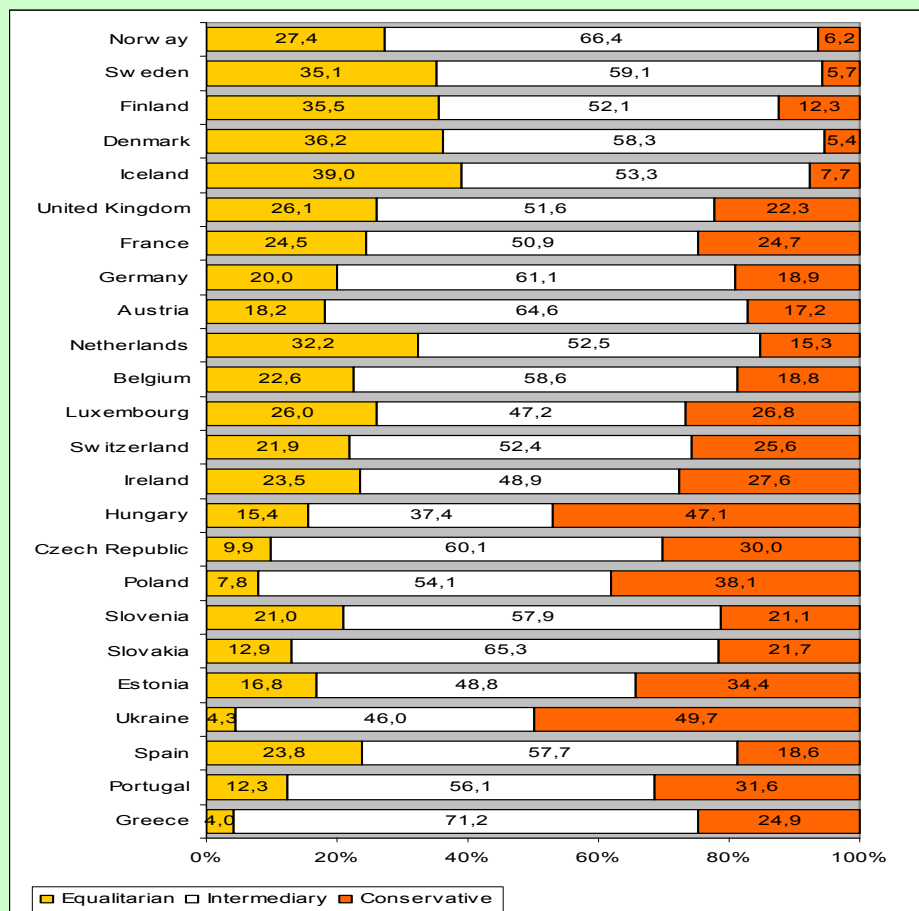
Equalitarian, intermediary and tradicional positionings by country



ESS (round2) 2004

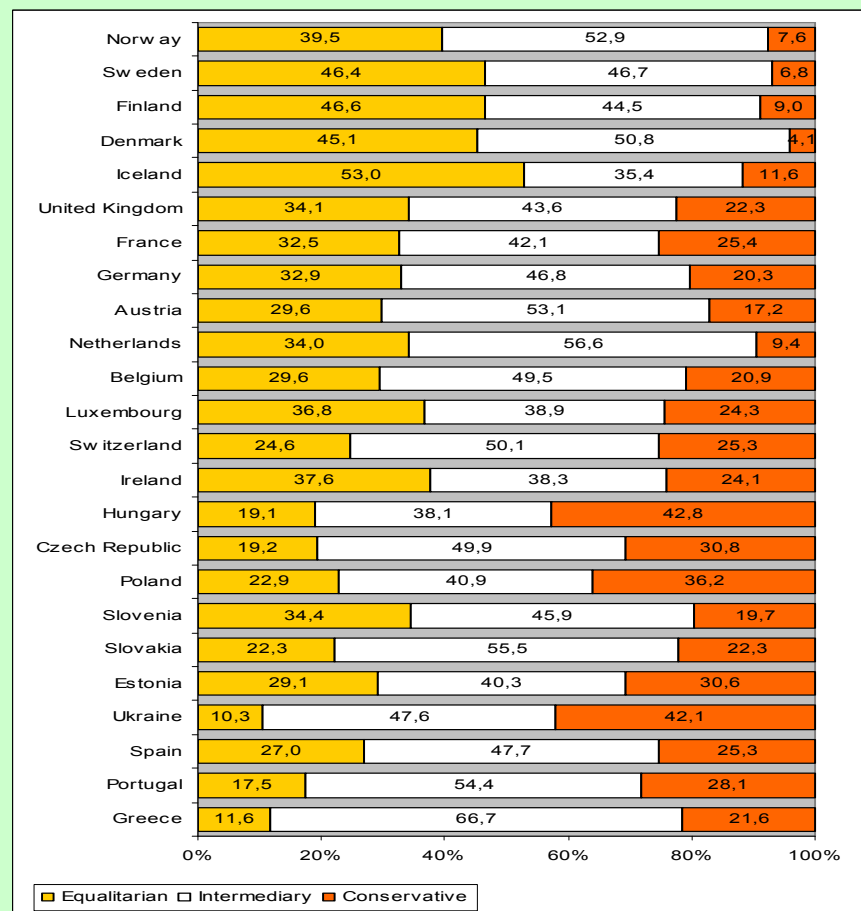
Equalitarian, intermediary and traditional, by country and gender

Men



ESS (round 2) 2004

Women



ESS (round 2) 2004

- The intermediary position is the dominant one
 - In a cross country perspective
 - In gender perspective
- Nordic countries have higher percentages of egalitarian individuals
 - Iceland (46,1%), Finland (41,4%), Denmark (40,8%), Sweden (40,7%), Norway (33,2%)
- Women are always more equalitarian than men
 - Hungary (42,8%), Ukraine (42,1%) and Poland (36,2%) present a relative high percentage of conservative women

- Looking closer to the dominant intermediary position we noticed the importance of the answer **not agree/nor disagree**.
- Usually in quantitative approaches the meaning of these type of answers are disregarded.
- Importance of assuming an ethnographic look towards every question.

Two possible interpretations:

- Gap between the ideological discourses and the universe of practices – gap between new incorporated discourses and older dispositions for action:
 - At ideological level: Europeans tend to be equalitarian
 - At practical level: some objective constraints feed traditional gender practices – e.g: different positions in the labour market, institutional and policy packages, welfare state regimes.
 - New meanings of the family not yet fully grounded, coexisting two different movements producing an ambivalent positioning
 - incorporation of new gender ideology in the family
 - conservation of traditional practices
- Different ways of asking questions produce different answers.
 - Questions addressed with a gender neutral perspective will be answered according to personal projects and wishes.
 - When gender roles are directly at stake the answers tend to be filtered by gender stereotypes.

Structural and cultural constraints

- When analysing European patterns on new meanings we must take into consideration the structural and cultural constraints :
 - Employment, youth unemployment
 - Precarity in labour market integration
 - Structural and historical dynamics of each country
 - Within each country social class differences
 - Changes in public policies and types of Welfare-States
 - Ideologies (Motherhood ideologies), values, combination of modern and traditional views

Conclusions and main trends

- A. Work as a dimension of social identity for both women and men. Women “prefer” to work professionally.
- B. New meanings of the family. Valuing family on a more modern, open and egalitarian mode. Clear desire of more involvement of men in the family.
- C. The parsonian model for the middle class – women at home men at work – is no longer sustained. Equality is a clear ideal, more involvement of men in the family is clearly desired.

D. But these new meanings of the family are not yet fully grounded, coexisting two different movements:

- Incorporation of new gender ideology in the family
- Conservation of traditional practices

E. Exploring these contradictions we found that:

- Women want to invest in both fronts (work and family). But in the majority of countries they have to pay a price for maintaining both investments
- Men don't do the majority of housework, nor care. The difference between men and women's hours of work (paid and unpaid) is unfavourable for women – women's overload.

F. Different ways of asking questions produce different answers and make visible these contradictions