

Integrating the Gender Dimension in Research

Foreword

Referring to the core guiding principles of the University of Bremen the issues of gender relations and equal opportunity are also core topics in research. In research projects where gender aspects play a relevant role, their due consideration constitutes a selection criterion for the commission. The following catalogue of criteria provides advice on how to ensure that those gender issues are adequately taken into account when applying for the funding of research projects.

Simone Lempart is author of this paper, published in June 2006. She was supervised by Prof. Dr. Ines Weller. Her sources were: Bühner, Susanne; Schraudner, Martina (ed.) 2006: Gender-Aspekte in der Forschung. Wie können Gender-Aspekte in Forschungsvorhaben erkannt und bewertet werden? Karlsruhe: Fraunhofer IRB Verlag.; BMFSFJ, Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (ed.) 2005: Arbeitshilfe zu § 2 GGO: Gender Mainstreaming in Forschungsvorhaben. Berlin: Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend.

More detailed information are available at:
<http://genderedinnovations.stanford.edu/index.html>

Criteria Catalogue

1. An initial assessment of the gender relevance can be ascertained by answering the following questions:

- Does the proposed research deal with issues which are either of direct or indirect relevance for men or women (e.g. in the areas of family, career, political participation, leisure activities, health)?
- Are men and women affected to different degrees? Where do the differences lie?
- Does the proposed research address possible differences between the work and life situations of men and women?

2. Where gender relevance has been identified, is it possible to integrate gender aspects at various stages during the course of the project? Answer the following questions to ascertain (applicants and reviewers) at which stages of the research process their implementation is appropriate.

2.1 Research question / Research issue

- Does the research question exclude women and young girls, even though the findings are intended to be applicable to both men and women?
- Does the research question either directly or indirectly imply that one gender (male) represents the norm, thereby restricting the spectrum of possible findings?
- Is the leading research question formulated differently for the two genders?
- Is there a sufficient integration of gender theory and literature? Does this have an effect on the formulation of hypotheses?

2.2 Concept and methodology

- Does the research design take account of both genders (in the major variables/thematic areas; in different situations)?
- Does the methods section mention whether the instruments are equally applicable to both genders?
- Does the research instrument assume either gender as being the norm for the other (e.g. men as norm for women)?
- Is the concept designed in such a way so as not to overlook socially or contextually important information?
- Is it possible to distinguish specifically between men and women?

2.3 Data collection / Data analysis

- Are the data presented separately for the two genders?
- Are all the sub-groups analyzed according to gender?
- In the event that only one gender is taken into account, are the findings subsequently seen to be applicable only to the gender in question?
- Is the choice of language appropriately gender-sensitive?

2.4 Interpretation and evaluation of hypothesis, conclusion, and publication

- Where both genders are taken into account, are the findings expressed in rather general terms, or properly differentiated according to gender?
- Where only one gender is taken into account, do the findings subsequently refer only to the gender in question?
- Does either the title or the project outline contain language, concepts or terminology of a gender-biased nature?
- Are both genders adequately represented in the graphics and tables?

Appendix 1

Examples in the area of social-scientific research

Example of 1

Research on the consequences of benefit payment Hartz 4: women living in unmarried cohabitation/marriage run a higher risk of becoming ineligible for grants.

Research on honorary activities and voluntary work: the voluntary or honorary activities carried out by men and women may carry different social status.

Compared to men, women may place different expectations on the design and development of products: e.g. women expect a household robot to be a help in body care, while men expect help with the housework.

Note on 2

In order to integrate gender aspects in research projects, the development and formulation of the research question and objectives should consciously and systematically take into account that the research findings are to be applied to both women and men, as well as girls and boys and youths of both genders.

In this early phase it is possible to make clear why the project, or part of the research, should only address one specific gender.

Examples of 2.1

Research on e.g. subjects like juvenile crime, for instance, should not only refer to “youths”, but explicitly to male and female youths. In this way it is possible to find out more about the gender-specific characteristics and differences in acts of violence or criminal behavior, and subsequently the specific consequences to be drawn with regard to male and female offenders respectively.

To carry on within a stereotype frame would entail interviewing male youths as the perpetrators and female youths as the victims.

Where the research concept foresees interviewing the member of the household with the highest income, it would be wrong to only interview men from the outset. In respect of thematic areas like the family, housework, household or reproduction, the research question should be extended to encompass the role of males.

The respective workload falling to the males and the females in a household as result of unpaid caring for the family or employment cannot be encompassed or referenced to each other by the mere aggregation of data on the level of the household.

Distortions may also arise when the man as the “breadwinner” is asked how adequate the household income may be and the woman, as the “partner”, about how the income should be spent.

Examples of 2.2

Men are portrayed in the active role, i.e. the “norm-setting” role, and women either in the passive role or as exceptions to the rule.

When conducting interviews on certain subjects, it may be beneficial for men to be interviewed by men, and women by women. Attention should also be paid to a gender-sensitive choice of language.

Notes on 2.3

This phase may under certain circumstances prove crucial to avoiding time-consuming and costly follow-up work. A target/actual comparison can avoid unwanted turns of event; it is possible to respond to new developments, questions, or topics at an early stage and in a gender-sensitive manner. This may give rise to varying implications for the respective genders, which can then be included in the project findings and recommendations for action.

Examples of 2.4

Exclusive use of the male form (the so-called “generic masculine”) in the interest of better

readability is inadmissible. Non-distinctive terms such as “head of household”, or the use of a generalizing male point of view (e.g. a “normal employment history” that as a rule assumes the absence of uninterrupted full-time employment on the part of women) are unacceptable in titles and project outlines.

Where the title, for instance, refers to “differences in rehabilitation benefits” for men and women, a corresponding table must contain the accordant differentiation.

Appendix 2

Examples in the area of natural-scientific research

Example of 1

In the case of research on the genetic manipulation of tobacco plants for the pharmaceutical use of proteins, investigations should take account of whether the potential risks of farming and consumption are for both sexes the same (women, for instance, are traditionally more involved in the preparation of food and may therefore be more strongly affected by a potential contamination of foodstuffs, animal fodder and confectionary containing proteins obtained from genetically manipulated crops).

With regard to the development of computer games, it is important to differentiate between the needs of female and male users. Such findings should be incorporated in the product development process (e.g. a stronger emphasis on female characters and “heroines”; a stronger integration of communicative elements in the games).

Women and men may place different expectations and requirements on the design and development of products (e.g. women expect help in body care from a household robot, while men expect help with the housework).

Notes on 2

In order to integrate gender aspects in research projects, the development and formulation of the research question and objectives should consciously and systematically take into account that the findings are to be applied both to women and men, as well as girls and boys and youths of both genders.

In this preparatory phase it is possible to make clear why the project or part of the research should only address one specific gender.

Examples of 2.1 and 2.2

Research on medicaments or the production of pharmaceutical substances should address the question as to whether the effects are the same for women and men, and incorporate appropriate investigation and analysis.

In the development of software for the simulation of airbags (inflation process), for instance, besides investigating the effects according to body size, the form and content of the entire simulation process with dummy modeling should take adequate account of the possible different effects on men and women.

Notes on 2.3

This phase may under certain circumstances prove crucial to avoiding time-consuming and costly follow-up work. A target/actual comparison can avoid unwanted turns of event; it is possible to respond to new developments, questions, or topics at an early stage and in a gender-sensitive manner. This may give rise to varying implications for the respective genders, which can then be included in the project findings and recommendations for action.

Examples of 2.4

Exclusive use of the male form (so-called “generic masculine”) in the interest of better readability is inadmissible.

When, for example, the title “The Development of Functional Foodstuffs” implies differences for men and women, the tables must also contain the accordant differentiation.