

Anne Boring: Impact of gender stereotypes in higher education and labor market entry



Anne Boring, is an economist, research associate at the Laboratoire Interdisciplinaire d'Evaluation des Politiques Publiques (LIEPP), assistant professor at the Department of Economics at Erasmus University Rotterdam and research fellow at the Women and Public Policy Program at Harvard Kennedy School. Since September 2018 she is the Chair for Women's Employment and Entrepreneurship at Sciences Po.

What is the focus of your research?

Anne Boring - I have been working on the impact of gender stereotypes in higher education and labour market entry. In particular, I have studied gender biases in students' evaluations of courses of study and gendered choices of academic orientation.

Currently, my work focuses on the differences between gender in entrepreneurship and professional careers.

In what way can gender influence the choice of orientation and professional careers?

Many research studies show that stereotypes, in general, influence orientation choices and professional careers. There is a wide range of possibilities about what one might do in the future; stereotypes can be used as a reference to limit this range of possibilities. In particular, stereotypes can have an important impact when there is a lack of information in the decision-making process. This is typically the case for guidance or career choices: students have to make choices about careers about which they often know little. Providing more high-quality information can help counteract the impact of stereotypes in decision making. Several studies show, for example, that having a female role model in a profession that is stereotypically male makes more girls want to consider this profession. Fellow [economists](#) have shown that female high school students may be more inclined to choose a scientific path after high school when they have had the opportunity to talk to female scientists who have presented their jobs to them.

Concretely, how does this affect career choices at Sciences Po?

Sciences Po is a unique institution in France, whose fields of specialisation remain rather mixed compared to other study programmes. The fact that students are exposed to the full range of social science subjects, particularly at the Collège Universitaire, means that they are well informed about the different specialisation options available, and this can help to reduce gaps when they enter the job market. Sciences Po has been actively working for several years to reduce these gaps, and in particular the pay gap. While these gaps persist, the [latest job entry survey](#) shows that they are gradually decreasing.

Which changes did you notice in the last few years?

On a wider scale, in France, data from the Ministry of Higher Education and Research show that there is still a strong gender segregation in study choices. In [an article](#), a colleague researcher and I show, for example, that women are under-represented in the fields that lead to the best paid jobs on the labour market. I think that public authorities have been hoping for a long time that the gaps would close by themselves. But it is clear that public authorities have an important role to play if the aim is to reduce gender inequalities in the labour market.

According to you, what are the main reasons why these differences persist and what do you recommend to rectify them?

I believe that the lack of information about the different opportunities and careers available is one of the main reasons why the differences remain. Also, some professional fields-and the higher education courses that lead to these fields-are not always very welcoming to women. Schools and universities have a key role to play in making it more likely that more women will choose professional careers in these areas, which are often well-paid. Finally, these professional environments themselves can be transformed.

Since 2018, you have been head of the Chair for Women's Employment and Entrepreneurship, what are the goals?

The Chair's main objective is to conduct research on initiatives to reduce gender inequalities in the labour market. The programme carries out research on issues such as equal pay and access to leadership positions, occupational segregation and women's economic autonomy. The programme applies experimental research methods to develop knowledge on how to effectively reduce discrimination, the impact of stereotypes and prejudices, and other barriers to gender equality. The ultimate goal of the programme is also to make the scientific knowledge gained available to a wide audience, including students, politicians and the business community.

To achieve these objectives, it draws on Sciences Po's unique expertise in gender impact assessment, gender equality and

entrepreneurship, as well as on the school's international academic partnerships with other prestigious universities. The Chair operates through the Centre for Entrepreneurship, the [Laboratoire Interdisciplinaire d'Evaluation des Politiques Publiques \(LIEPP\)](#) and the [Programme universitaire et de recherche sur les questions de genre \(PRESAGE\)](#).

Learn more

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- [Centre pour l'entrepreneuriat](#)
- [Laboratory for Interdisciplinary Evaluation of Public Policies \(LIEPP\)](#)
- [Programme universitaire et de recherche sur les questions de genre \(PRESAGE\)](#)
- [Women in Business Chair](#)