

December 2020

Understanding the Unconscious Bias of Gender in Boñar, Spain

Alicia Cabral
California State University Monterey Bay

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/csp>



Part of the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Cabral, Alicia (2020) "Understanding the Unconscious Bias of Gender in Boñar, Spain," *Culture, Society, and Praxis*: Vol. 12 : No. 2 , Article 2.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/csp/vol12/iss2/2>

This Main Theme / Tema Central is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Journals at Digital Commons @ CSUMB. It has been accepted for inclusion in Culture, Society, and Praxis by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ CSUMB. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@csumb.edu.

Understanding the Unconscious Bias of Gender in Boñar, Spain

Alicia Cabral

In the summer of 2019, I conducted a field research course in Boñar, Spain, where I interviewed women about their involvement in the mining industry. However, when I asked locals questions regarding mining, they would usually direct me to a male. In this paper, I will explain how socialization played a role during my field research when the townspeople in Boñar directed me to male miners instead of women.

Boñar is located in the Spanish province of León. According to the 2020 census, Boñar has a population of about 1,348, with 51% of the townspeople being women and 49% being men (Citypopulation, 2020). This town has a rich history that is centered around the mining industry, with multiple mining areas surrounding the village and a talcum factory located within Boñar. However, when the mines began to close, many of the rural areas surrounding the mines distributed around Spain felt the effect. Since the closure of the mines, many locals have left in hopes of finding work.

With mining jobs being dominated by males and seen as a masculine career, the women have become socialized to send a question about mining to the men. In Boñar, I first recruited interview participants at the bar. I would talk to men who worked in the mines, in the hopes of them connecting me with female workers. The men were happy to talk about mining and their participation, but when I would ask the men questions about female miners, they would instead explain that the role of women was mainly limited to housework and child-rearing. This posed the

question: how does socialization create roles exclusively for women?

As I continued my search to interview women who worked in the mines, I began to connect with more locals at the bar. Many were aware of my project, and when I would present the subject of mining to the regulars at the bar, they would begin discussing what men I should interview and how connecting with these former male miners could also direct me towards a woman who may have worked beside them. At first, I agreed to speak with male miners in hopes of finding a woman in the town who fit my criteria. I would begin by asking the men if they knew of any women involved in mining. They would disregard my question and begin to talk about their own experience. As I tried to get the conversation back on track, their body language and tone showed they were uninterested in talking about women's supporting roles during the peak of the mining industry within the town. Even after these encounters, other bar patrons attempted to introduce me to more male miners. After my previous experience I tried not to offend any of the male miners, explaining that I was grateful for their input, but my focus was only on women.

Alicia Cabral is a Mexican American full-time graduate student at California State University, Monterey Bay. She is currently pursuing her Master of Social Work degree, focusing on gender equality. Alicia can be reached at alcabral@csumb.edu

Culture, Society, and Praxis

After meeting with multiple people who had previously worked in mining, I decided to go to the Red Cross in the hopes of interviewing women who had formerly worked in the talcum factory or the mines. Carmen, the president of the local Red Cross, connected me with three women who worked in the talcum factory. Prior to interviewing the women who worked in the talcum factory, I also interviewed the worker who maintains the abandoned talcum factory. I learned about the day to day operations of the talcum factory, which helped me understand the work.

Because it was so difficult to find female miners, I decided to open up my criteria to include women who have an immediate connection to mining. This allowed me to not only interview the women in the factory but to also interview the female family members of the miners. However, as I began to interview the women, the wife of a miner would direct me to talk to her husband with questions related to mining. On the other hand, when I asked questions about their contributions to help support their husbands and households, women were willing to answer.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Women in Boñar were expected to fulfill dual roles within and outside of the household. Men and women would tend to segregate and interact with the same gender, with the exception of family settings. Women would care for the children while the men would socialize. Women's caregiving was largely invisible: seen not as essential, but as part of their gender identity. Women were expected to maintain the upkeep of the household and the child-rearing, while also respecting a male's status as a head of the household.

The lack of recognition of women's contributions in history reflects a bias against women's history. The reluctance to accept

work in women's history is due to construct roles of men and women as well as the relationship between them. Gender stereotypes are the result of gender socialization.

Gender socialization occurs when individuals are taught about norms and behaviors expected of their respective gender, which typically begins in early childhood. Gender norms become reinforced by family expectations, peer groups, and school. Women are groomed from a young age to fit the roles society expects them to fulfill, while the men are seen as the breadwinners and held at higher social status. Men and women have been socialized into specific roles; traditional roles for women are of homemakers while males are seen as the heads of household.

When I would ask to speak with women, the locals would turn me down and direct me to men instead because that is how they are socialized. When the townspeople would direct me to the men, they were unintentionally being biased toward the women and their contributions because women's mining work is not seen as important for the industry to flourish. The impact women had within the community was assumed to be through household obligations, in line with their socially constructed gender roles.

In Boñar, there is a gendered hierarchy that made finding female miners difficult. Men are put on a pedestal because of their gender; this would impact how the community views them and predictably, the manner in which they would behave when presented with questions about the contributions of women as it pertains to mining instead of theirs. As a result, women's roles in the mining industry were downplayed and minimized. While the men's work in the mines were valued and discussed without mentioning women's supporting work.

Culture, Society, and Praxis

The town's behavior during my field work showed how the ideology of male machismo is still present. Machismo is the strong sense of masculine pride which is associated with a man's responsibility to provide for, protect, and defend his family. Machismo can consist of oppressive behavior toward women and children. Boñar's society expects men to be assertive, competitive, and primarily focus on the values of wealth, material success, and achievements, while women are expected to be focused on people, nurturing, and improving others' quality of life. The ideology of machismo has oppressed the role of women throughout society and has emphasized stereotypes that emerged from gender socialization. The oppression of women is based on their status

in history where women have an unequal relationship to men.

CONCLUSION

Within the culture of Boñar, women have become socialized to fit into gender roles that were socially constructed by their community. When the townspeople would direct me to the males when presented with questions due to their culture, they did not see it as being biased since gender roles were taught to them very early on. They directed me to the men in part because men were predominantly involved in mining, but also because they have been socialized to minimize women's contributions and support of the industry.

REFERENCES

Citypopulation. (2020). Retrieved from https://www.citypopulation.de/es/spain/localities/leon/boñar/24021000401_boñar/