



Inequality in recruitment: gender discrimination in the stevedoring sector

M. Villanueva-Flores¹, P. Peña-Zapata², F. Piniella³

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we analyse the perceptions of a group of women on the consequences of the lack of female representation in the stevedoring sector. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews, which were then analysed using an inductive approach. Significant efforts have been made to achieve equality in access to jobs traditionally considered male. In the stevedoring sector, the ideal candidate is associated with hegemonic masculinity. Gender stereotyping seems to influence individuals' beliefs and their expectations and evaluations of others. These arguments justify the exclusion of women from this occupation. In sectors marked by a certain degree of conflict, gender inequality and discrimination are even more pronounced.

1. Introduction.

The literature on injustice and discrimination provides evidence that qualified women receive lower evaluations than men in selection processes (Fielden and Davidson, 1997), and it has been suggested that this is due to gender stereotypes. For some jobs, the interviewers involved in the staff selection process hold an image of the ideal candidate (Fielden and Davidson, 1997; Stuart, 1992) and in certain organisations, this image is associated with being male and with hegemonic masculinity (Peterson, 2007).

Here, we focus on the perceptions of a group of women concerning the stevedoring sector and the reasons why it has remained predominantly male with few opportunities for women. Our aim was to investigate the causes and consequences of the total lack of female representation in the stevedoring sector in Algeciras (Spain), and to propose possible interventions based on this analysis. Using an inductive method, we analysed the transcripts of semi-structured, in-depth interviews held with 9 women interested in stevedoring work in Algeciras.

Our results show that the ideal worker in the stevedoring sector is distinctly gendered and reinforces stereotypical masculinity, since only men are considered to possess the skills and characteristics necessary for correct performance of these jobs. Despite years of struggle to achieve equality in male-dominated occupations, government policies and quotas have changed very little with regard to gender relations in certain occupations. Although women possess the necessary aptitudes, training and skills, they continue to experience discrimination in access to these posts as a result of the stereotypes, customs and traditions of a sector whose image of the ideal candidate is related to gender. In sectors marked by a certain degree of conflict, as is the case of the stevedoring sector in Algeciras, gender inequality and discrimination are even more pronounced.

Before describing women's perceptions of the constructed image of the ideal stevedore and how this image is both based on stereotypes and gendered, we will first discuss how theories on the ideal worker have framed our expectations about the material. Second, we will describe our case in more detail. Subsequently, we will describe the interview protocol we used and how we performed the content analysis. The paper ends with a discussion, the conclusions and the implications and limitations of the study.

¹Assistant Professor. Business Administration Department. University of Cádiz (Algeciras, Cádiz)

²PhD. Student. MSc in Port Management and Logistics. University of Cádiz (Algeciras, Cádiz).

³Professor in Maritime and Logistics Safety Policies. Dept. of Maritime Studies. R&D Group Maritime Policy. University of Cádiz (Algeciras, Cádiz).

2. Theory.

2.1. *The ideal worker: gender-based stereotyping.*

More than 30 years have passed since the concerted study of diversity and gender in organisations began in management and related fields. Much of this research has analysed women's work experiences with respect to sex segregation, sexual harassment, careers, the glass ceiling and wall, discrimination and wage inequity (Bell, 2012; Berry and Bell, 2012; Evetts, 2000; Muli, 1995; Shaffer *et al.*, 2000). Discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another in a similar situation because of their personal characteristics, such as sex, nationality, race or ethnic origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or beliefs (Directive, 2000). Injustice and discrimination continue to occur in personnel hiring processes. Supervisors and managers making hiring decisions often contribute to job segregation processes by acting on stereotypes when selecting women and minority groups for certain types of jobs and whites and men for other jobs (Browne and Kennelly, 1999). There is clear evidence that similarly qualified and experienced women receive lower evaluations than men in selection processes. The reason for this has been explained in terms of sex-role stereotyping (Biernat, 2003; Deaux, 1984; Fiske, *et al.*, 1991). Gender stereotypes are usually defined as generalisations held by a large proportion of the population that distinguish men from women and are stable over time (McCauley, *et al.*, 1980). Specifically, men are commonly believed to exhibit "masculine" traits such as, competitiveness, independence and dominance, whereas women are believed to exhibit "feminine" traits such as communality, nurturance, and dependence (Martell, 1991). Thus, some managers often assume that the qualities they are seeking for certain kinds of work are more likely to be found in a man than a woman, with qualities such as cooperation and team work not being given the same credit as aggression, strength and competitiveness (Davidson and Cooper, 1994). Hence, gender stereotyping seems to influence individuals' beliefs (Lift and Ward, 2001) and more importantly, their expectations and evaluations of others (Cole *et al.*, 2004; Deaux, 1984). Reskin and Roos (1990) investigated employer stereotypes and notions of appropriate and inappropriate workers for certain types of job and documented processes in which women's high presence in certain jobs and occupations supported the feminisation of these. Once a job has been labelled a female or male job, the corresponding work is assigned accordingly.

Other researchers have reported that the predominance of women in certain types of job supports assumptions and stereotypes about their suitability for these (or unsuitability for other positions) (Reskin, 1999; Ridgeway, 1997; Tomaskovic-Devey, 1993). Sex segregation occurs when members of one sex comprise 70 percent or more of the people in a job or occupation (Berry and Bell, 2012). For years, researchers have demonstrated that sex segregation is common in the workplace. Women's representation in less prestigious and low paying occupations has contributed to the low status of working women. They are more likely than men to work in occupations that have short career ladders, are part time and less pay (Jacobs, 1999;

Roos and Gatta, 1999). Women are expected to be more caring and nurturing, take on lower level work roles and exhibit deferential behaviours. Women supposedly choose occupations consistent with their "natural" talents and life-cycle choices (Allison, 1994; Gatta, 2002), and stereotyping employers are more likely to choose women for such occupations (Reskin and Roos, 1990).

The concept of an "ideal worker" is used to refer to the competence necessary for an ideal representative of an occupation and/or of an ideal member of a specific work organisation. The idea of gendered worker ideals is closely related to what has sometimes been called gender typing, which can be defined as "the process through which occupations come to be seen as appropriate for workers with masculine or feminine characteristics" (Britton, 2000, p. 424). The ideal worker that defines the ideal qualities, skills and behaviour of an employee in terms of hegemonic masculinity renders it difficult for women to be identified as valuable, ideal workers by colleagues and management (Peterson, 2007).

In personnel selection processes, unstructured interviews have been found to be the least reliable and valid method, and may present a significant barrier for unemployed women in their search for employment. Those women who are successful in reaching the interview stage face yet further discrimination based on the male model of management, decreasing their chances of success (Fielden and Davidson, 1997). Interviewers tend to make attributions about the candidate based upon their own self schema, and usually choose a candidate with whom they can feel comfortable and who they feel will fit into formal and informal organisational networks. Thus, the successful candidate will mirror the interviewer's main characteristics, impacting on decision making (Fielden and Davidson, 1997). Perry *et al.* (1994, p. 790) asserted that gender-based selection decisions are a necessary condition for gender segregation. They addressed the activation of mental models called "schemas" in the categorisation of people during the selection process. Stereotypes are specific types of schemas in which perceptions about people are based on categories related to race, gender, age or other categories. They suggested that when a certain jobholder schema is activated during the selection process, a job applicant's attributes are compared to the jobholder schema and the applicant is selected based upon congruency with it. Therefore, if a schema is associated with a male, considered the ideal worker, then the applicant who is perceived to have more male-congruent attributes is more likely to be selected than the applicant who does not. In their study on sex discrimination in traditionally male occupations, Darity and Mason (1998) offered evidence from studies and court cases as confirmation of employers' discriminatory practices based on gender. They attributed these practices to solid preferences linked to stereotypical beliefs and associated ranking for preferred employees within the context of certain jobs (Berry and Bell, 2012). Terborg and Ilgen (1975) indicated that the traits viewed as necessary for success in certain jobs were thought to be present in men and lacking in women.

The underlying assumption is that stereotypically masculine characteristics are necessary to be successful in the workplace.

These stereotypes are associated with the image of the ideal employee for certain types of work. The phenomenon of constructing women as the “other” who is perceived as different from the ideal worker is typical for most, if not all, organisations (Acker, 1990; Bailyn, 2006; Rapoport *et al.*, 2002). Hence, the culturally shared image of the ideal worker as someone who can work as though they have no social or caring obligations outside work affects how commitment is defined and competences are valued (Lewis, 1997; Rapoport *et al.*, 2002). Commitment is widely constructed in terms of work primacy, such that time to spend at work is unlimited, and the demands of family, community and personal life are secondary. Consequently, assumed masculine values and behaviours, such as the ability to work long hours and competitiveness are associated with the ideal worker, while assumed feminine values and behaviours such as collaboration and interpersonal skills are undervalued in workplace settings. Ideas of competence thus become related to hegemonic masculinity (Bailyn, 2006). That is, assumptions about commitment and competence are so linked to the idealised images of men and masculinity that the achievements of men and especially women that do not conform to these images are hardly recognised (Bailyn, 2006; Bendl, 2008; Rapoport *et al.*, 2002). These assumptions are deeply embedded in workplace structures.

Therefore, there is research evidence of the maintenance of inequality between the sexes in organisations (Powell *et al.*, 2009), despite laws prohibiting discrimination in employment. We wished to add to this theoretical debate by examining if the image of the ideal worker in the stevedoring sector fits the theoretical assumptions, and is related to gender, and whether the image of the ideal worker in this sector is based on stereotypes, giving rise to discrimination against women in access to employment as stevedores.

3. Case and method.

3.1. The stevedoring sector in Spain.

One of the factors affecting the competitiveness of port facilities is the activity of cargo handling, which has become a strategic element in the Spanish economy but also one of the most conflict-ridden port services. The regulations concerning the movement of freight in Spanish ports have become increasingly complex and detailed, in line with the liberalising zeal underlying the philosophy of the European Union. Several laws have been aimed at liberalising the sector, but due to constant protests by stevedores, this goal has not yet been achieved. Spanish legislation (RD-L 02/1986; RD 371/1987; Law 27/1992) establishes that ports of general interest must create private companies, known as a Limited Company for the Management of Port Stevedores (*Sociedad Anónima de Gestión de Estibadores Portuarios*: SAGEP), which are responsible for hiring stevedores and making them available to stevedoring companies. These regulations also oblige all companies wishing to provide cargo handling services to join a SAGEP and participate financially in its capital. The European Commission (EC) has noted that stevedoring companies domiciled in other

Member States who wish to provide these services in a Spanish port of general interest must possess sufficient financial resources to participate in the corresponding SAGEP, and must hire SAGEP workers under conditions that are beyond their control—including the minimum mandatory number of SAGEP workers who must be given permanent contracts and above all the price payable to the SAGEP for access to these workers. According to the Commission, such obligations necessarily imply that foreign stevedoring companies will have to modify their personnel and employment structures and hiring policies. In fact, Spanish port regulations prevent stevedoring companies from freely selecting and retaining their staff, since they oblige them to hire staff that they do not really require. The Commission also noted that for other Member State stevedoring companies, the financial implications and operational disturbances caused by these modifications could hinder or render less attractive the exercise of freedom of establishment in Spanish ports of general interest (see, by analogy, the Commission/Netherlands ruling, EU:C:2004:620, paragraph 15).

Given this situation, the European Commission initiated proceedings against Spain before the European Court of Justice (ECJ) for breach of the European Union Treaty (EUT) in the matter of stevedoring at ports. In its judgement (2014), the ECJ declared the Spanish regulations illegal since they impose on companies from other Member States who wish to provide cargo handling services in Spanish ports of general interest the obligation to register with a SAGEP and, where appropriate, to participate in the capital thereof, and also to hire workers made available by this company on a priority basis, as well as to hire a minimum number of such workers on a permanent basis.

Therefore, the stevedoring sector presents very specific characteristics. It has not yet been liberalised, and the SAGEPs select the stevedores who form the workforce in this sector.

3.2. Method.

The port of Algeciras, which is the busiest container port in Spain, has a staff of 1,879 stevedores (1,522 with permanent contracts and 357 with temporary contracts), all of whom are men. These handle towering cranes measuring more than 50 metres high, which move containers weighing several tons over the heads of those working on the decks of ships capable of carrying more than 18,000 containers. This is therefore a high-risk profession, but this has not prevented women from attempting to train as stevedores for Algeciras port. In November 2014, the organisation of women stevedores of Algeciras was created with an initial membership of 25 women who argued that women could carry out loading and unloading as well as men, and that therefore women could become stevedores. After founding the association, the women sought to enter the until then “forbidden territory” for them of the stevedoring sector.

Using an inductive method, in this study we analysed the transcripts of semi-structured in-depth interviews held with 9 women (interviewees 1 to 9), aged between 19 and 45 years old and interested in entering the stevedoring sector in Algeciras. Interviews lasted about 60 minutes and were all held face-to-face. They were conducted following prior appointment and were recorded with the permission of the interviewee.

wees to enable accurate transcription and subsequent analysis. The questions were designed and ordered prior to holding the interviews. Anonymity was guaranteed, ensuring that respondents answered openly and without constraint to the questions posed. We asked them about their experiences and the reasons why women were not represented in the stevedoring industry. We also asked them about their opinion regarding the hiring process for employment as a stevedore. The interviews were coded according to an open coding method, and selected fragments were questioned and compared constantly (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). During research team meetings, the theme of the ideal worker was identified as well as how this ideal image was gendered.

4. Analysis.

4.1. The image of the ideal stevedore: abilities and skills.

We found that the image of the ideal stevedore was associated with an individual who was strong, tough, resilient, independent and flexible as regards the demands of the job. This image reflects characteristics that contribute to a culture which can be characterised as a form of hegemonic masculinity. This image of hegemonic masculinity is conveyed through gender stereotypes that associate strength, resilience, rationality and independence with men, while women are considered inferior (Bleijenbergh et al., 2013).

Respondents referred to the stereotypes that led men to be considered the ideal workers in the stevedoring sector. For example, interviewee 2 said:

Unfortunately, people still think that the male-female stereotype is a reason not to hire women, especially because of maternity leave. I think that we need to move beyond these antiquated ways of thinking, if we're so delighted these days with progress in technology, communications... then we have to make progress in this. You cannot say that women are now very well regarded... and then paper over the cracks. I don't understand why maternity leave and our extra work at home is considered a reason to deny us jobs as stevedores and see men as ideal for these positions.

The interviewees claimed that women have the necessary abilities and skills. Although they considered that strength was required to do the job, they were clear that women could do it as well as men. However, they reported that men were still considered the only ones with the strength to carry out this type of work. As interviewee 4 commented:

It's true that lashing is hard work and requires some strength, but it's not all about strength. There are women who are strong enough to do that job and others who aren't as strong, but the same is true for men. We don't want privileges, in fact, we haven't even been able to leave our CVs with the company. We want to enter on equal terms, if we have to lash cargo, we'll do it, if we have to drive a truck, we'll do it, and if we have to get soaked on the ship, we'll do that too like all the others. We don't want privileges or more rights, only a job on equal terms. People should stop thinking that it's only men who have the capacity for this type of work, we can do it too.

The women did not think that strength was the only quality necessary for this work; instead, they felt that it also required psychological preparation, independence, flexibility and knowing how to adapt one's life to the job. As interviewee 8 said:

More than strength, this job requires putting up with irregular hours because you never know when you're going to work or at what time, which prevents you from making plans, interferes with normal sleep patterns, and so on. Then there's the weather. It's really hard work, since you might only have 6 days off in a month and you never know when you'll be called. People think that it's only men who have this kind of availability.

Thus, stevedoring is considered hard work that requires resilience and a strong mind. Interviewee 3 made a similar comment:

It's a very hard job because you have to work whether it's cold, hot, windy or raining, so it's essential to have a very strong mind and a huge capacity for adaptability. You also need to have the necessary knowledge to use the machinery, the ability to concentrate and above all, a sense of responsibility, because in this job you're not only risking your own life, but also that of your work mates. But we can use these machines too, and adapt ourselves to situations, not just them.

The image of the ideal worker has been reinforced by custom, as the stevedoring sector has traditionally been considered a male sector. As interviewee 3 noted:

Stevedoring work has progressed and changed throughout its history. Before, it was one of the toughest jobs there was, because the only tools they had were their own hands. It was a job that nobody wanted. People only worked as stevedores because they couldn't find a better job. When the stevedoring sector emerged, it was not considered suitable for women to work, and because of that, and also because of its hardness, stevedoring was defined as a job for lower-class men. As this idea has been maintained over the years, it has become a custom and culture of the sector.

4.2. Training begins to be implemented in the sector, but not for women.

The profession of stevedore has traditionally been viewed as a hard and difficult occupation that requires great physical effort and demands health and strength. The figure of the stevedore does not exist in Spanish laws on education, i.e. there are no courses on stevedoring. As interviewee 9 commented:

There's a vast difference between what the job was like before and what it's like now. Before, almost all of the work was manual, but today it's based on highly qualified work with machinery. The Ports Act required 300 hours of work experience or a vocational training certificate, but this was a paradox because there is no professional training in stevedoring. Therefore, they established a list of qualifications that certified you to be a stevedore, but which had virtually no relationship with stevedoring. Even if you have the required training, people still think that only men understand machines.

However, attitudes are changing and companies now ask for stevedores with training, who know how to use machinery, are

familiar with cargo handling techniques, have a basic understanding of languages and have received training in accident prevention. As interviewee 8 commented:

In the past five years, companies have been selecting the new generation of stevedores who have received training. In many cases, there was initial resistance from the workers to going on training courses, but gradually they've realised that training helps them carry out their work properly. In the case of women, they don't even look at your training, you might have the necessary training but it doesn't count for anything.

4.3. Achieving equality and proving their worth: a job in itself.

To achieve equality of opportunity in access to the stevedoring sector, women have had to create the organisation of women stevedores. Since its foundation in 2014, they have held protests, organised meetings with members, with the work councils of some of the companies in the sector and with local political parties, and have repeatedly but unsuccessfully tried to meet with the work council of the SAGEP. As interviewee 6 noted:

These days, the doors are open for men to work in any profession, but not for women. It's astounding that in the 21st century we're still having to fight to be allowed to work in a sector that until now was only open to men. Just trying to enter a male sector has become a job in itself.

They believed that should they obtain access to the sector, they will be subject to close scrutiny and will have to prove that they are able to do the work. As interviewee 3 said:

In some cases, it will mean extra work because it's a fact that some people are prejudiced and we'll have to do more to demonstrate that we're worth the same. This very same thing happened to me a couple of years ago, but if you work harder it's easy to prove your worth. There's more pressure. If you've been hired it's because they believe you're capable of doing the job and you shouldn't always have to be doing more than anyone else, but the fact is that it depends on the person and the situation.

4.4. Age and gender: barriers to hiring.

For interviewees, the gender barrier was higher than the age barrier, but these can sometimes be combined, as interviewee 5 explained:

These days, there are limitations at all ages. In your 30s, they're worried that you might get pregnant, in your 40s you have dependants, and if you're approaching your 50s you're too old. So they see disadvantages at any age, but if what the company wants is to find a worker willing to work, develop professionally and meet the company objectives, any person of any age should be suitable.

4.5. Personnel selection based on tradition and custom.

The selection process conducted by the stevedoring company (SAGEP) is governed by tradition and custom, and in order to be considered, it is still essential to have a relative in the sector and to be male. As interviewee 1 said:

The SAGEP personnel selection system is yet another area of contention that has sparked much debate because it's not normal that they only accept "the sons of", although this does happen in many other companies as well, but with this company in particular, there are more than 1800 employees and this means 1800 opinions and 1800 relatives. I think that everyone should have the opportunity to apply for a post, then whether they hire you or not will depend on the company, since in the end they hire who they believe is best qualified for the job.

Interviewee 8 made a similar comment:

To gain access, it's essential that your father is working and has contacts in the work council when you decide you want to become a stevedore. If he's retired, it's no longer so easy to enter because fewer jobs are awarded to the sons of retirees, and usually there are more sons of retirees than jobs. So when you add together the sons of retirees and those of stevedores who are still working, that means there are double the amount of sons of employees who want to get in, which makes it even more of a nerve that they hire people willing to pay for it rather than the sons of employees. What's more, what guarantee is there that women who enter won't have to go through what the men are going through? At the moment, everything is based on "tradition"; this is how it's always been done so this is the right way to do it. People don't complain because they might need a favour from someone tomorrow, or they might be on the work council and can take advantage of this. So it's all based on favours and nobody wants a change.

Along the same lines, interviewee 7 said:

It is an open secret who decides who is hired or not, the work council. In fact, if you have a son and want him to enter, you go straight to the work council and ask them.

Some of the stevedores are still opposed to allowing women to enter the stevedoring sector, as interviewee 9 explained:

It's a fact that some of them are opposed, as a general rule the most uneducated ones, who aren't necessarily the oldest or longest serving workers, because in the last two rounds of stevedore recruitment, most had the required qualifications, but in previous rounds, they took on a lot of sons with little or no basic education, sons who weren't at all interested in studying because they had a father who could get them a job as a stevedore and the only thing that mattered to them was the money, what they would earn. These are the ones who are most opposed.

In a sector marked by conflict, as is the case of stevedoring in Algeciras, inequality and gender discrimination is even more blatant, and change is required to end this discrimination. Thus, for the situation of women in the stevedoring sector to change, it will be necessary to change the rules, as interviewee 8 explained:

At the moment, the actors involved in the world of stevedoring aren't going to support women becoming stevedores as long as the SAGEP continues its policy of only hiring the relatives of stevedores, since if they continue with this practice and also allowed women to work in the sector, the only women who would have access to this profession would be the daughters and relatives of these actors. When this rule changes, the next step will be to support women who want to be stevedores, but for now this is the primary objective.

In sum, the image of the ideal worker in this sector continues to be that of someone who is strong, able to use machinery, with no dependants, flexible, able to adapt to the hours and changing weather conditions, and that image is related to men. In addition, the image of the ideal stevedore is reinforced by the custom and culture of the sector. Although the women had the required training to enter the selection processes, this training is still not taken into account, and the interviewees felt that achieving equality and proving their worth had become a job in itself. Although the gender barrier was much higher than that of age, these can act in combination. When stevedores are hired, access to the selection process is reserved for the male relatives of active workers. Thus, the ideal worker in this sector is distinctly gendered and reinforces stereotypical masculinity, since only men are considered to possess the skills and characteristics necessary for correct performance of these jobs. This renders it difficult to achieve gender equality in the stevedoring sector.

Discussion and conclusion

Allan (1989) has suggested that age is the most significant barrier facing the unemployed in their quest for a job. However, the results of the present study indicate that for many women, the main barrier to entry into some jobs on the labour market is gender. This is not an unexpected finding, but demonstrates once again the continued persistence in the labour market of the notion that certain jobs are associated with men. The results obtained in this study indicate that in sectors marked by a certain degree of conflict, such as the stevedoring sector, inequality and gender discrimination are more pronounced. This suggests that although some progress has been achieved over the years, equality remains no more than an ideal which in reality we are still far from achieving.

Our results also reveal that the image of the ideal worker in the stevedoring sector is that of a lone, independent individual who is flexible, strong and does not have childcare responsibilities or care obligations outside work. This puts people with care responsibilities, usually women, at a disadvantage. Thus, we conclude that the notion of the ideal stevedore is distinctly gendered and reinforces stereotypical masculinity, since only men are considered to possess the skills and characteristics necessary for correct performance of these jobs. The necessary qualities of an ideal stevedore were reflected in the different answers given by the respondents, who defined these as flexibility, strength, skill in using machines and complete availability for work whenever necessary. These qualities create an image of the ideal stevedore that is identified with men.

Despite over 30 years of struggle for equality in male-dominated occupations, government policies and quotas have changed very little with regard to gender relations in certain occupations. In personnel recruitment and selection processes, the unstructured interview is one of the most frequently used tools, but is also the least valid and reliable, and may constitute a barrier to the recruitment of women in these jobs. Women who succeed in reaching the interview stage then face a male model of management that reduces their probability of any further success.

However, there are still some sectors in which women are denied access to selection processes, such as the stevedoring sector.

Therefore, the contribution of this study is to demonstrate that in sectors marked with a certain degree of conflict, such as the stevedoring sector in Algeciras, where the fundamental characteristic that governs selection processes is having an active family member within it, inequality and gender discrimination are even more pronounced. It has been suggested that gender stereotypes will slowly disappear as more and more women enter the workforce. Nonetheless, as researchers have shown, many “old fashioned” attitudes persist in individuals. Accordingly, the current findings suggest that gender stereotypes still exist in organisations. Although women possess the necessary aptitudes, training and skills, they continue to experience discrimination in access to these posts as a result of the stereotypes, customs and traditions of a sector whose image of the ideal candidate is related to gender. To end such gender discrimination, it will be necessary to make changes. As Berry and Bell (2012) have noted, identification of processes of inequality resulting in stereotyping and discrimination may help reduce them, thus increasing opportunities for work, wages and benefits and reducing poverty for members of the most devalued groups.

Our results indicate the need for human resources management policies and practices that promote the inclusion of women in a traditionally male sector, facilitating gender equality within the same, as well as the need for the involvement of governmental bodies that support change within the sector. Decisions at the political level are required that put an end to this situation and bring the stevedoring sector into line with other sectors, where any person, male or female, with the suitable skills, capabilities and profile to perform the job can access selection processes and be hired.

One of the limitations of this study was the absence of the perceptions of workers opposed to the inclusion of women in the stevedoring sector. Hence, it has not been possible to compare their perceptions. Future lines of research should include these perceptions, and compare the situation of stevedoring in Spain with that in other countries. Further research is also necessary to investigate how the image of the ideal stevedore changes within the same sector between different countries. An additional question to ask is how the entry of increasing numbers of women into the labour market and into positions of responsibility will change the perception of roles and jobs considered male and female in society. How will these changes affect gender stereotypes in 50 years' time? As societies continue to change, will the same stereotypes operate? Will they become more entrenched or will they change? Only future research can begin to address these issues.

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