Lund University

European Master's Degree in Human Rights and Democratisation
2014/2015

WHAT IS SO SCARY ABOUT GENDER EQUALITY EDUCATION IN FRANCE?

Analysing a French education program to promote equality and its consequences.

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Abstract:

This thesis analyse a French education program, which aims to further equality between girls and boys, to fight against sexist stereotypes and to promote at school critical thought concerning gender issues. The program started to be implemented as a pilot project in 2013 and it faced protests against it. Some conservative groups of people opposed it and tried to boycott it. Nonetheless, the program continues. I asses why the program is necessary, from an International Human Rights and a sociological and interdisciplinary point of view, as I explain, among other things, why sexist stereotypes are negative and reinforce inequality. In addition, I analyse what are the reasons behind the protests. I found that some of the people might not have enough information about the program; there was a communication problem from part of the Government. However, there are also very conservative views were present in France. Those views could be influenced by religion in some cases, but this does not constitute the entire explanation.

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1. Introduction

This thesis aims to analyse a French education program to develop further equality between girls and boys, to fight against sexist stereotypes and to promote critical thinking concerning gender issues. France presented an education program for equality between boys and girls at school level whose pilot program, called "A, B, C, D for equality" started to be implemented in 2013 in 247 schools of France[1]. Although, it faced several obstacles, as part of the population in France protested against it and intended to boycott it, this program was finally generalised to all levels, kindergarten, primary and secondary education since 2014.

We are wondering why this type of program was conflictive, who protested and the reasons behind it. We would also like to analyse if the program was necessary and positive, through a perspective of Human Rights and gender equality, and how the implementation was. We want to address this problematic from an International Law and International Human Rights perspective, as well as from a Sociological perspective and from a Political Science one. We want to go to the bottom of the question, to know what is the influence of an education of one type or another, to analyse the concepts behind gender equality and behind deconstruction of stereotypes, which was one of the main aims of that program.

We will start by explaining the legal background and the reasons explaining the need for this education program; then, we will move to the sociological explanation of gender, gender construction and gender stereotypes. Later on we will explain with detail the education program and its implementation, and finally we will analyse the reasons against it, who represented the retractors and the influences behind them.

The methodology of this thesis consists on a mixed method, as I used literature review, qualitative methods, such as content analysis, and quantitative methods, such as statistics and comparison of different data.

The reason why I have chosen this topic is because I believe gender equality is not completely achieved yet. It is still present, in different forms, from salaries gap to sexism stereotypes and sexual harassment. The problem is not only inequality as such, but how a patriarchal system, which has been present in society since the Roman

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[1] Minister of Women Rights in France, 2014

Empire or even before, has transmitted different gender roles for women and men. The problem is how many girls still think that the most important thing to achieve for them is to be pretty, as this is the message they see around them, and this affects their life in a very negative way, trying to accomplish impossible standards and not realizing how their importance should not be based on their appearance. And how many boys learn to be aggressive and learn that showing emotions is a weakness, which also affects their lives. These are just few examples of many, of how the gender constructions and gender relations under a patriarchal mentality can be negative for both sexes.

Therefore, when I knew about this education program, which tries to be critic on these aspects, which tries to promote a gender equality mentality at school, free of sexism stereotypes, which would take into consideration a gender equality perspective when teaching, and when explaining about the world, I just though it was a fantastic initiative. Education is crucial, and although many other things influence us, if we could learn in a way that took into consideration all these aspects, I believe there could be improvements. I chose to study the case in France with this new program as the types of protests that were against this project surprised me. I wanted to analyse why people would oppose this and how was in fact this program, how this could be implemented successfully and go deeper into why it is so important.

Let's start by explaining how the program was created and how international organizations recommend this type of education.

2. Legal background and reasons explaining the need for the Gender Equality Education Program in France

In France, since 1989, there is a law that establishes that schools have the goal to embrace equality between girls and boys. This principle can be found as well in the Constitution and in International Treaties that France has ratified, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Moreover, since February 2013, there is a Inter-ministerial Convention which has the goal of creating equality between girls and boys at the educational system in France, for the period of 2013-2018 [2] .The first step to follow the Inter-ministerial

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[2] (My translation) Euzen, 2014

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Convention was the creation of a pilot program called "A, B, C, D for equality", with the mission of implementing gender equality measures in 247 schools of 10 different districts in France in 2013[3].A Committee for the management of the program was also created.

Previous to study in detail this pilot program and the consequences of it, we will revise some of the most important international treaties and international documents that encourage gender equality education. However, first of all, we are going to present a preliminary explanation of "gender stereotypes", as one of the main objectives of this education program in France is to fighting against them.

"Gender stereotyping presents a serious obstacle to the achievement of real gender equality and feeds into gender discrimination. Gender stereotypes are preconceived ideas whereby males and females are arbitrarily assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their sex."[4] Furthermore, sex stereotypes influence the development of skills, educational and professional patterns and general opportunities in life. Moreover, stereotypes about women serve to maintain hierarchical relations of power of men over women[5].

CEDAW establishes in the article 10 (c) that for the aim of fighting discrimination at educational level, States should take measures such as: "The elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education by encouraging co-education and other types of education which will help to achieve this aim and, in particular, by the revision of textbooks and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods".

In the last CEDAW country report on France, from 2008, the Committee "welcomes the steps taken to eliminate gender-role stereotypes, (…) the undertaking of a study on stereotypes in school textbooks. However, the Committee shows its concern about the fact that academic orientation remains strongly influenced by stereotypes. As a result, women continue to be concentrated in a narrow range of employment. The Committee also notes the persistence of stereotypes, including on immigrant and migrant women, that affect their position in the labour market, characterized by high

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[3] Minister of Women Rights in France, 2014
[4] Council of Europe, Gender Equality Commission, 2013
[5] Ibidem

unemployment rates, part-time work and limited participation in public life and decision-making."[6] As we can see, the education program on gender-equality in France is in line with the recommendations that the Committee encouraged for France.

The Beijing Declaration points out in its paragraph 72 that the "Creation of an educational and social environment, in which women and men, girls and boys, are treated equally and encouraged to achieve their full potential, respecting their freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief, and where educational resources promote non-stereotyped images of women and men, would be effective in the elimination of the causes of discrimination against women and inequalities between women and men"[7]. In addition, it also underlines in paragraph 74 that curricula are gender-biased, showing traditional gender roles, and that educators can reinforce discriminatory and sexist tendencies towards girls. Moreover, it specifically targets the problem of gendered career path in its paragraph 75; "Science curricula in particular are gender-biased. Science textbooks do not relate to women's and girls' daily experience and fail to give recognition to women scientists". Finally, paragraph 77 explains the influence of the construction of gender roles by the media and how education should impulse critical thinking in relation to this. The Beijing Declaration is from 1995; nonetheless, as we will see, the problems described still constitute a concern.

These measures were already encouraged in 1995, but the gender equality education program, which includes similar measures as the ones here collected, still faced problems in France in 2013, as we will see along this paper.

To continue with the international background, we can acknowledge that UNESCO has different tool-kits on how to promote gender equality at schools, such as one for the Asia-Pacific network[8]. These tool-kits have not only the intention of increasing the attendance of girls at school, but also to improve the knowledge of teachers concerning how stereotypes can have a negative influence and how to create a less sexist education.

In this same spirit, UNICEF has an operational guidance to promote gender equality. This includes, for instance, the revision of school curricula or "addressing the

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[6] Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2008, Paragraph 18.
[7] Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995, p. 26
[8] UNESCO, 2009.

ways in which boys often receive much more classroom attention than girls."[9]

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) also provides "Policy lessons to improve gender equality in education", and it has a focus on the importance that more girls follow STEM careers (Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics), because it is considered a choice based on gender stereotypes, and those careers are the ones who provide better 'earning levels' and the current situation "deprives OECD economies of a source of talent and innovation."[10]

The Fifth report from the European Commission on "Equality between women and men", from 2008, which is made in collaboration with the Member States of the European Union, determines that "Stereotyping constitutes a barrier to individual choice for both men and women. It helps to preserve inequalities by influencing the choice of education, training or employment, participation in domestic and family duties, and representation in decision-making jobs. It can also affect how an individual's job is valued. Getting rid of stereotypes is one of the priorities of the Roadmap and the European social partners' framework of action on gender equality."[11]. In addition, it establishes actions for combating these stereotypes from a very young age.

The article 14 of the Istanbul Convention mentioned that it is is necessary to have in the curricula gender equality issues, including "mutual respect, non-violent conflict resolution in interpersonal relationships, gender-based violence against women and the right to personal integrity"[12]

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe made a recommendation to the member states, on 2007, on "gender mainstreaming in education". Their first recommendation is "incorporating the principle of equality between women and men into national laws on education, (...) and promoting *de facto* equality between women and men in society as a whole" [13], and it is followed by different kind of measures, targeting the legal framework, the educational institutions, the teaching material or the media. Some of the measures are, for example, to establish regular data about gender

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[9] UNICEF, 2011, p.4
[10] OECD, 2011, p.2
[11]European Commission, 2008, p.8
[12] Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, art.14
[13]Council of Europe, 2007, Paragraph 38

equality at education level, to have specific gender equality education programs and guidelines, to promote democratic values and human rights as a whole, to try to work with editors and publishers to avoid sexist stereotypes in textbooks and to encourage teachers to challenge the stereotypes that may appear in textbooks, to present open views on career opportunities, work on preventing violence against women and raising awareness about the problem -for both teachers to realize about it and react, as well as for the girls and boys-, and, as a last example, to explain the influence of media and foster critical thinking.

In a very general way, we can establish as the main issues concerning gender equality in the European Union, based on the scheme of the "Report on Progress on equality between women and men in 2013" from the European Commission, the following; women employment, equal pay for equal job, equality in decision-making process and violence against women.[14] These are general facts, which need, nonetheless, a holistic perspective to combat them, as they are all product of the lack of real gender equality in EU, sexism is still very alive and institutionalized in the system, which explains the need of efforts to work more into an egalitarian society. There has been improvements, but still, the report underlines " At this rate of change, it will take almost 30 years to reach the EU's target of 75% of women in employment, over 70 years to make equal pay a reality, over 20 years to achieve parity in national parliaments (at least 40% of each gender), over 20 years to achieve gender balance on the boards of Europe's biggest companies and almost 40 years to ensure that housework is equally shared. In other words, if nothing changes, many of us won't live long enough to see equality between women and men achieved."[15]

Moreover, an OECD report when talking about women, underlines that "compared to men, they are less likely to work for pay, more likely to be employed in lower-paid occupation and sectors, and more likely to have temporary employment contracts. Compared to men, employed women also work fewer hours, are less likely to progress in their careers and are under- represented in decision-making positions. As a result of these factors – and in some cases due to discrimination, which however is rarely directly observable or measurable - women are paid 16% less than men, on

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[14]European Commission, 2014
[15] European Commission, 2014, p.3

average across the OECD. Furthermore, wage gaps are often larger at the higher end of the wage distribution, reflecting the so-called glass ceiling which blocks female career progression and consequently leads to loss of talent."[16] According to Eurostat, in France the gender gap in salaries is 15,62%, and the EU average is 17,67 %[17].

Regarding violence against women, a survey from 2012 from the Fundamental Rights Agency of the EU shows the following data; "An estimated 13 million women in the EU have experienced physical violence in the course of the 12 months before the survey interviews"[18]; 28 % in EU of women in the EU have "experiencing physical and/or sexual partner violence since the age of 15"[19]: "An estimated 3.7 million women in the EU have experienced sexual violence in the course of the 12 months before the survey interviews. This corresponds to 2 % of women aged 18–74 years in the EU"[20]; "One in 20 women (5 %) has been raped since the age of 15"; "Some 12 % of women indicate that they have experienced some form of sexual abuse or incident by an adult before the age of 15, which corresponds to about 21 million women in the EU"[21]. Finally, it is also underlined that the majority of victims do not report the cases.[22]

This general map of Europe helps to illustrate how important the question of gender equality still is. In addition, there are different studies that will show how gender stereotypes are still in place in France and how important would be for the future career of boys and girls if gender equality mainstream program could change or try to change this. In a survey from 2014, it is shown that girls receive less encouragement to be ambitious and pursue their goals than boys; "Questioned the value transmitted by their parents, the French give a very sexist image of education they have received. A number of values are subject to a strong differentiation in the transmission by sex: confidence (61% of women think they have received, against 73% of men), the desire to exceed (49% against 62%) or the taste for competition (32% against 48%). The taste for studies, however, seems to be a shared value (59% against 60%), as was the need to be financially independent (82% against 87%). Thus, less than one in two women reported

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[16] OECD, 2011, p.3
[17]   L'Observatoire des inégalités, 2014
[18] European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014, p.2
[19] *Ibidem,* p.2
[20] *Ibidem,* p.3
[21] *Ibidem,* p.4
[22] *Ibidem,* p.1

receiving the essential values of professional ambition is the desire to excel and win"[23]

Other statistics show differences on equality between women and men in France, as the fact of the salary gap mentioned *supra*, the fact that women still "have to" do more house tasks than men[24] or that the proportion of women in the Parliament was 18,5% in 2010[25]. Violence against women presents the following picture in France; "almost 216000 women, with age between 18 and 75 years, face physical or sexual violence by their ex or actual male partner"[26] and only 16% denounce.

Another fact in France, which was constructed as one of the main reasons to impulse the gender equality education program, was that, even if girls have better school results, they only chose very traditional "feminine" sectors, and they restrict their choices to only some domains. The same happens to boys, which are often restricted to choose some mayors, which are considered as more "feminine". Women graduate with a 76,6% result and men with 68,8%, but women only represent the 43,5% of students in the first year of the preparatory classes for the *Grandes Écoles[27],* which are the *elite* universities in France, the most competitive ones for which you usually need to go to the "preparatory classes" mentioned above. This is mainly due to stereotypes, and France realizes the need to fight against them.

The information seen shows different problems concerning inequality between men and women, which are still very present in Europe as well as in the World. We will have to keep in mind if the education program on gender equality can mitigate these effects, if it can, indeed, help to make a more equal society.

I believe education can be seen as one of the keys to solve many problems, especially concerning many human rights threats; an education in the respect of each other and in democratic values can prevent human rights violations. This cannot be the only measure, but it is a very fundamental one. Education shape people, but education is not *neutral*, it can transmit many different kinds of values; I believe it is important that the values transmitted are equality and non discrimination, fighting against prejudges and educating critic citizens, which are able to think for themselves and also citizens

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[23] My Translation, Lévy-Saragossi, 2014
[24] Hamel and Rault, 2014, p.2
[25] Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques
[26]   (My translation), Quillet, 2014
[27] (My translation), Convention interministérielle pour l'égalité entre les filles et les garçons, 2013

who value mutual respect and freedom. All this cannot be done without an impulse of gender equality mainstream in education. Sexism stereotypes are found in many places, from publicity, television, group of friends, family, politics and so on. Therefore, it is evident that education institutions alone can not make the change of very deep values, prejudges and gender roles *learned* since we are born, there must be efforts in other fields to combat stereotypes, such as in the media, for example, which play a very important role. Nonetheless, even if socialisation take places in different groups, such as "families, peers groups, churches"[28], education institutions play also a key role; "what a student learns about gender in school and elsewhere is considered to be crucial to the development of self-identity and to the ways in which students evaluate and relate to others in society"[29]

Education on gender equality can contribute to prevent sexist stereotypes, gender-based violence, unequal payment, unequal work at the house, unequal time spent with the family and many other circumstances that have their origin in sexist stereotypes and gender inequality. Gender equality is obviously beneficial for the women, for their well-being and opportunities, but also for men, to broad their choices when breaking stereotypes roles, and to society as a whole.

Before going forward, we will analysis with more detail what gender or gender stereotypes refer to, and how these are constructed. There are different definition and different ways to see how to achieve gender equality, and therefore, many different feminist theories. We cannot explain all of them here, but it is necessary to have an overview for our analysis of this program.

3. Sociological and multidisciplinary perspective on Gender, Gender Construction and Gender Stereotypes.

(a) Gender and Gender Construction.

It is important to understand the meaning of gender and gender relations from different theories, as these views influence the direction on how to achieve equality between women and men, which is the aim of the education program in France.

As a premise, gender studies have shown that gender roles are socially

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[28] Bank, 2007, p.4
[29] Ibidem

constructed, as the well know phrase of Simone de Beauvoir says; "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman"[30]. As we will see, this view is in opposition with the views defended by the detractors of the gender equality program in France, that support that the differences in gender roles are based on nature and that is natural that a boy wants to play with the ball and a girl with the doll.

Gender can be considered as "the social construction of masculinities and femininities"[31], but is not used in the same way by all academics. Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott consider that it "denotes a hierarchical division between women and men embedded in both social institutions and practices"[32]. Moreover, they emphasize that "gender cannot be abstracted from the wider social relations with which it is enmeshed, that gender intersects other social divisions and inequalities, such as class, 'race' and sexuality, and that the meaning of masculinity and femininity vary within, as well as between, societies".[33]

Margaret Mead studied 3 different New Guinea societies in 1930, discovering that there were roles of men and women different from those in Western society. For example, in the first one both sexes had caring qualities, which in Western world are considered feminine, and in the second one both sexes were more aggressive.[34] This study helped to understand how gender was mainly socially constructed. However, Mead points out that, despite the differences on human organization between sexes in different cultures, "what is deemed masculine is always and universally deemed also to be superior"[35] The author said: "men may cook or weave or dress dolls or hunt humming-birds, but if such activities are the appropriate occupation of men, then the whole society, men and women alike, votes them as important (Meas 1950/1962)"[36]

Liz Stanley also explains the evidence of why gender is a social construction. In synthesis, we can acknowledge it by the fact that there are variations on femininities and masculinities between different cultures, between the same culture over time and

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[30]   Simone de Beauvoir, 1949
[31]   Stevi and Scott, 2002,p.1
[32]   Ibidem
[33]   Ibidem, p.2
[34]   Ibidem, p.7
[35]   Ibidem
[36]   Ibidem

variation in the culture at the same moment of time; not all women or men follow the same gender preconception of femininity or masculinity.[37]

Moreover, we can analyse the cases of intersexuality or people that "one or more of their biological sex characteristics do not match"[38]. In a considerable percentage of these cases, people will have the majority of biological features corresponding to one of the binary sex categories, female or male, but with the exterior biological features corresponding to the other sex category, such as the case of Kleinfelter's syndrome, with more masculine features but external female sex. These cases are discovered medically because these people will not have their period and they will be infertile. However, the person is socialised as being a "women"; which is an example of how gender and biology differs. Natural scientists acknowledge that the "gender, social sex and psychological sex, are all entirely matters of upbringing."[39]. It is important to underline this, at it has been consider that the view of gender as social construction come from, or is exclusive from, Social Science, when, in fact, "the implications of this natural science research/ practice are perfectly clear- that 'sex' is important, but not as important as social factors."[40]

To conclude this section, there can be debates on the extent of biological differences that we can find between women and men, and what are the role they play in the gender construction of the person, -if they do-, but we have to acknowledge the common ground that social construction play, which is a key role in the definition of gender and the interaction between what is considered men and women. It is important, therefore, is to challenge the social construction that limit the individuals and create hierarchical relations. Even if there are differences from a biological perspective, are those determinant to have a system of inequalities? Evidently, not.

The materialist feminist, a school of thought from the 70's, with French origin, consider that to end the hierarchy between men and women, to end the patriarchal system, it would be necessary to end with the notion of men and women. It is the idea that because gender is socially constructed, the fact that we still "belong" to one of these

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[37]   Stanley, 2002, p.32-35.
[38]   Ibidem, p.34
[39]   Ibidem, p.35
[40]   Ibidem

binary constructions continues to make unbalanced powers. The notion of women and men, therefore, should be eliminated[41]. Moreover, materialist feminist point out the idea that not only gender but also sex is also a social construction, which is a view shared by Judith Butler. However, I think that from that point of view everything is a "social construction". This is evident that everything is created by human language, so how satisfactory can be that sex is also constructed when everything is? They explain that we have established a series of reasons to explain why some biological features will determine female or male, and it is predominantly focused on the idea that women can bear children, even if not all women can and specially, they cannot after some age.[42] In addition, others sociologist point out that sex can be socially constructed in the sense that the body is also exposed to social forces that influence it, and we also transform our body with our choices[43], from having a sex change to some men focusing on being stronger and women avoiding some sports and selecting some others depending on the physical shape that these create.

Christine Delphy underlines how even if feminists, and other theoreticians, realize that the gender attributed to each sex, and their hierarchical relationship, are socially constructed, they do not want to eliminate the categories, but to preserve gender, and Delphy ask why? Why preserve something that creates inequalities? She concludes, "We shall only really be able to think about gender the day when we can imagine nongender"[44].

This idea may seem very radical, but I believe it could make sense to certain extent. Why do we need to make a distinction if "we are all equal"? Could not it be possible just to be ourselves, with whatever characteristics we have, in regardless of our sex? I believe that even if the categories are difficult to erase, and are still very present, we could move from making our biological sex our primary identification as a person, move from the importance it is attributed to be a women or a men to an stage of major indifference in regard to the fact of being a women or a men, and it could help to actually end discrimination and sexism. In this mission, the idea that being a girl or a

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[41]   Stevi and Scott, 2002, p.17
[42]   Delphy, 2002,p. 53-55
[43]   Giddens, 2007, p.444
[44]   Ibidem, p.58

boy is not what should define an individual, that the choices of a person do not have to be limited by being a boy or a girl, which are part of the program in France, could maybe help to not put gender as the primary identity. Nonetheless, these dimensions are still very intrinsic in society and our socialisation, and, as we will see, the program in France, the communication regarding it, stresses that they do not want to eliminate the 'differences' between boys and girls, that they just want to make them *equal* -but *different*-[45].

Queers theories and other theories of postmodernism also position themselves against the idea of having a dualism; "masculinity/femininity, rationality/emotionality or heterosexual/ homosexual. The underlying assumption is that one side of the dualism is superior than the other"[46] and "women will never attain equality with men as long as a language and an ideology continue to constitute them as inferior"[47].

Judith Butler point out that people can have one sex, but it does not determine the gender they "do": they could even "do" a gender sometimes and other times another one, putting the clear example of travesties, which shows the idea that 'gender' does not have to be static, and that travesties do an imitation of an imitation which is gender [48]. Therefore, her thesis is that gender is *performative*[49]. Butler's theory underlines that "if gender does not follow automatically from sex there is no reason to believe that there are inevitably only two genders."[50] It can be questioned; what are bodies prior to the assignation of a "gender"?

If gender is the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes, then a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way. (...) Assuming for the moment the stability of binary sex, it does not follow that the construction of "men" will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that "women" will interpret only female bodies. Further, even if sex appears to be unproblematic binary (...), there is no reason to assume that genders ought to remain as two[51].

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45 Bouysse, 2014,p.17
46 Bank, 2007, p.5
47 Ibidem
48 Butler, 2002, pp.48-50
49 Jackson and Scott, 2002,p.19
50 Ibidem
51 Butler, 1990, p.6

Thought the study if Raewyn Connell, we can also understand better the hierarchical gender relations as well as the importance of the type of 'masculinities' and 'femininities' that we transmit to future generations. Connell establishes that there is a premise in the gender relations which will be the domination of the women by the men, but inside this, there is also a hierarchy between types of masculinities and femininities: "the hegemonic masculinity dominates all the other masculinities and femininities in society"[52]. Domination comes with the power of a culture institutionalized in different spheres. The hegemonic masculinity will be a heterosexual, strong, with authority and sportive men[53]. However, the paradox is that only few men could have in real life this "ideal" masculinity. Under the hegemonic masculinity we will find the accomplice masculinity, which benefits from the first one even if it does not reach the 'ideal', and after this there are other kind of subordinated masculinities, being the homosexual masculinity the last one in the hierarchy, as they are not consider as "real men". In addition, all the femininities will be subordinated to the hegemonic masculinity, but with some differences: the first one will be stressed femininity, which will be a accomplice of the hegemonic masculinity, it will be a woman "which respond to the interests and desires of men"[54], and is the one most represented in our media. The second one will be resistant femininities, which reject the first kind of femininities, and which do not appear in the mainstream media. Nonetheless, for Connell gender relations are not statics, but a continuous process and she believes they are changing.[55] Connell's idea indicates how men who do not achieve the ideal hegemonic masculinity can also be marginalized and many times they have to constrain to these stereotypes to avoid discrimination. In addition, it helps to see how only one kind of 'femininity' is usually represented, the one which is subordinated without questioning the hierarchy.

After analysing some of the different positions regarding the concept of gender, we will see the theories on how we become "gendered". The first feminist sociologists believed that we were socialized into a gender since we were born, in the sense that "individuals were seen as passively programmed to accept an inevitable gendered

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[52] Giddens, 2007,p.446
[53] Conell, R. W, 2002
[54] (My translation), Giddens, 2007,p.447
[55] Ibidem, p.448

fate"[56]. Contrary to these liberal feminists, which believe gender " is shaped by social interaction" and culture and these constructions become "relatively fixed by the time a person enters adulthood", social constructionist theories believe that people participate in the construction of gender, and this is more flexible; "After all, if socialisation into conventional femininity had been so effective, feminism could not have existed."[57] People are not passive agents but "active agents that created and modify the roles by themselves"[58], even if influenced by the society; Barbara J.Bank mentioned "although people construct them, they do so *not* under circumstances that they choose, but rather under the conditions of a patriarchal culture and social institutions, including schools, which are stratified by gender".[59]

In this line, Bronwyn Davies says that both sex and gender are part of a social structure, individuals learn what it is to be a woman or a man, but "social structure is not separate from the individuals who make it up. It is not a 'thing' that can be imposed on individuals. It nevertheless has material force. Individuals cannot float free from social structure. They can choose to act on and transform structures, but structures must always be recognized as constraining individual and social action."[60]

There are many masculinities and femininities that can be seen in society, not only one model, and the dualism of masculine/feminine has also been challenged[61]; "The meanings of masculinity and femininity are not fixed. Not only do we individually negotiate our own sense of ourselves as gendered, but also ideas about gender vary across social and cultural settings**.** The dominant definitions of normal masculinity and femininity have been shaped largely by white Western middle class and heterosexual views of the world. Hence other forms of femininity and masculinity have often been seen as deviant."[62] Children are placed into one "category" or in the other since they are born, but there is also "an active processes of interpretation and negotiation"[63].

Bronwyn Davies made a study on the effects of 'gender construction' in kids, by

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[56]   Stevi and Scott, 2002,p.269
[57] Ibidem
[58] (My translation), Giddens, 2007, p.433
[59] Bank, 2007,p.5
[60] Davies, 2002, pp. 281-283
[61] Bank, pp.17-18
[62] Stevi and Scott, 2002,p.270
[63] Ibidem, pp.269-270

observing children in pre-school in Australia. Specifically, the main part of the project was to read non-traditional/feminist tales and to observe the reactions of the children, what they learnt and how they saw or "performed" gender stereotypes[64]. It presents an "alternative to conventional models of socialisation: a postructuralist approach to gender"[65]. She pointed out that "each of us, as members of society, takes on board as our own the 'knowledge' of sex and of gender as they are socially constituted. As children learn to discursive practices of their society, they learn to position themselves correctly as male or female, since that is what is required of them to have a recognisable identity within the existing social order."[66] However "out of the multitude of conflicting and often contradictory possibilities, each person struggles to achieve themselves as a unitary, rational being whose existence is separate from others, and yet makes sense to those others."[67]

In the introduction of the book, Davies points out how the efforts of parents or teachers not to "socialize" their children into the traditional femininities or masculinities, are focused on what they consider the worst part of it; they would like boys not to be *so* aggressive or girls to be more assertive. However, what they do not see is that these different characteristics are part of the overall "dualism of masculine and feminine"[68]. This is the idea that if we teach that there is masculine and feminine, that the first is for boys and the second for girls, then those boys and girls will learn how to act on the gender that they are placed in, and these dualisms, boys and girls, masculine and feminine, are built up on showing the differences between one and the other. Why would we have two genders if not? We have two *different* genders, it is assumed that they *have* to be different, and they *have* to prove those differences to be part of the identity, which can make them adapt characteristics seen such as aggressiveness versus complacent, for example. However, saying this example, we also have to keep in mind, at the same time, that this 'stereotypical' characteristics may not be reflected in all societies in the same way, not even in the same society between different social classes or different cultural backgrounds, as Barrie Thorne shows by

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[64]   The study is collected in the book Frogs and Snails and Feminist Tales, from 1989.
[65]   Stevi and Scott, 2002,p.281
[66]   Ibidem, p.283
[67]   Ibidem, p.284
[68]   Davies, 1989, p.12

studying the behaviour of teenagers in high schools in United States[69]. Thorne points out that we cannot generalise in the terms "girls do this" or "boys do this" when approaching gender, but we should ask "which boys or girls, where, when, under what circumstances"[70]. This is the idea, already mentioned, that "gender takes shapes in complex interactions with other social divisions and grounds of inequality, such as age, class, race, ethnicity, and religion"[71].

Coming back to Bronwyn Davies, she mentions that the way to understand gender will come from different places, but we can not forget that the individual is also part of the construction of society, and that "the society is being constantly constructing through those discursive practices"[72] and therefore, we can change the narratives.

Regarding the relation between gender and education, the second wave of feminist, from the 60's and 70's, will focus on an additional step beyond the liberal feminist demand of parity inclusion of girls and boys at school; they want to include specific positive measures for gender equality inside school, to revise the curriculum, to make teachers aware of stereotypes and the need to equal treatment[73], among other policies. This perspective is the one adopted by the French gender equality education program.

As we have seen, there are different theories of the meaning of gender, sex and 'socialisation' into gender. Now, we will analyse stereotypes, which play a big role in conforming gender roles.

(b) Gender Stereotypes

We have seen the different international recommendations to fight against gender stereotypes, as it is established that they have a negative effect on gender equality and non-discrimination. However, we will explore more on the effect of stereotypes from an analytical perspective, to understand what is the correlation between -sexist- stereotypes and inequalities, to explore the reasons why this fight is

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[69] Thorne shows how some girls will also be 'aggressive'-have fights or insult-, and how "generalizations about 'girls' culture come primarily from research done with girls who are class-privileged and white". Barrie, 2002 p.296
[70] Thorne, 2002 p.299
[71] Ibidem
[72] Davies, 1989, p.14
[73] Bank, 2007, pp. 17, 713,715

relevant and why is so important that the French gender equality education program includes it.

From the perspective of socialization, "Gender roles and stereotypes are the pillars of gender socialisation. Through them, boys and girls are assigned the norms, roles, expectations and social spaces for male and female identity."[74]

Stereotypes are defined by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights as "a generalised view or preconception about attributes or characteristics that are or ought to be possessed by members of a particular social group or the roles that are or should be performed by, members of a particular social group"[75] and it is defined what international human rights law requires to States to modify which are "harmful" stereotypes: "A stereotype is harmful when it limits women's or men's capacity to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and make choices about their lives and life plans"[76].

More in general, we have to consider that: "A stereotype tell us: about the world before we see it. We imagine most things before we experience them. And those preconceptions, unless education has made us acutely aware, govern deeply the whole process of perception"[77]. Not all stereotypes do have negative connotations; these may be mere generalizations. However, "many stereotypes do carry such connotations (negative), such as where women are stereotyped as inferior to men".[78] A very simplified, but clear, explanation of what an stereotype is, is the one provided by the French National Education General Inspector Christopher Marsollier, which says "stereotypes are to say what girls are or are not, what boys are or are not"[79] and he explained the difference between stereotypes, which are beliefs, and discrimination, which are behaviours and acts, but " if we let the stereotypes to settle down, the discrimination develops"[80]. We have to consider that "naming a gender stereotype and identifying its harm is critical to its eradication"[81], as many of them seem invisible;

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[74] European Regeneration Areas Network, p.7
[75] Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2014, p.1
[76] Ibidem, p.1
[77] Cook, and Cusak, 2010,p.10
[78] Ibidem, p.12
[79] Marsollier, 2014
[80] Ibidem
[81] Cook, and Cusak, 2010, p.3

"where a stereotype operates undetected, and is reinforced by the statu quo, by the prevailing gender hierarchy, or hierarchies of social and economic power more generally, a necessary measure toward its elimination is to become conscious of it and identify how it harms women"[82]. An example expose by Rebecca J Cook and Simone Cusak is the change of addressing violence against women not as a "normal" part of a relationship or a "private matter", but as a gender based violence, to perceive it as an issue that constitutes a problem.

They explain that there are reasons why we stereotype, such as the need to simplify the world we live in and make it more "predictable", another reason is to differentiate *them* from *ourselves;* " we label people so that we do not have to take the time or make the effort to understand their differences, to know them as individuals"[83]. CEDAW has expressed that even if there are differences between countries, gender stereotypes persist in all of them, and especially concerning the one that "focused on women as caregivers"[84]. Rebecca J.Cook and Simone Cusak explain the difficulties of getting ride of stereotypes, as they are enclosed in our societies, but they believe a way forward is to value positively characteristics considered 'feminine'.[85] However, from other feminist theories, such as post modernism and queer theories, the overall fact of differentiating between feminine and masculine, having this binary distinction between women and men, is what creates a power hierarchy[86], as we have seen.

An OECD report, which shows statistics on the difference choices between girls and boys after school, indicates: "To the extent that gender differences in the choice of field of study are the result of personal preferences, they would not need to be addressed by policy makers. However, the fact that gender gaps in performance are smaller than gender gaps in attitudes leads experts to believe that choices in tertiary education are partly affected by gender stereotyping, within and outside the school."[87]

A scientific experiment measuring how stereotypes can affect the result of

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[82]   Ibidem, p.37
[83]   Ibidem, p.16
[84]   Ibidem, p.23
[85]   Ibidem, p.24
[86]   Bank, 2007, p.5
[87]   OECD, 2011, p.27

people in a text can be interesting to demonstrate their direct effect. The fact that we are exposed to gender stereotypes and we are treated differently since we are young, affects our way to perform in a task. For example; "women perform worse on a task described as a mathematical test, than on the same test described as a problem-solving task. Framing the task as a mathematical test likely triggers the activation of a negative stereotype in women, as women are stereotypically considered worse in mathematical tasks."[88]

The authors of the report made a scientific study where 3 different groups of men and women, a total of 177 persons, from ages between 20-31 and from the University of Tubingen (Germany), were asked to perform a task that had no gender connotation before. The first group was given gender neutral instruction, the second group was "told that males usually perform worse on this task (an explicit negative message for males, and an implicit positive message for females), and the third group was provided with prior information that females usually perform worse on this task (an explicit negative message for females, and an implicit positive message for males)"[89]. The results showed that there was no gender difference in the achievement of the task in the first group, however, in the second one the achievement of men was inferior to that of the first group, but also women did worse in this one than in the first group. In the third group, women performed much worse than men in the task. The conclusion of the study is that "(i) Gender related stereotype messages affect both females and males, with a more pronounced impact on females. (ii) Irrespective of gender and message directness, the valence of a gender stereotype message affects performance: negative messages stronger affect performance than do positive messages. (iii) Directness of stereotype message has differential impact on performance of females and males: females tend to be stronger affected by implicit than by explicit messages, whereas in males this relationship is opposite"[90]. We also have to keep in mind that the diverse effect of stereotypes on women and men can also come from different socialisation of women and men into stereotypes and gender roles in the first place. In any case, it is interesting to see how, indeed, stereotypes affect our behaviours and achievements.

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[88]   Pavlova1, Weber, Simoes and Sokolov, 2014,p.2
[89]   Ibidem, p.4
[90]   Ibidem, p.7

Another study points out some facts that happen at school and shape gender roles; "The preponderance of the male model and androcentric contents in school subjects; The language used to communicate inside the classroom; The use and distribution of school space"[91]. This demonstrates is that education and school as institution are not gender neutral, not at least in general. The gender equality education program in France has the objective to change that issue, to ensure the equal inclusion of girls and boys and to stop the reproduction of stereotypes, which limit the space of freedom for boys and girls. The study mentioned above exemplifies that, even if girls tend to have better result at school in some places, there are still differences, as we have seen, after school is over, and this could be due to the "hidden curriculum"[92], to the different stereotypes placed on men and women. Differences on the teacher's attitudes had been called the *chilly climate effect*, which is a problem that can occur to girls and to minorities, and these are small, -or not so small-, gestures of differentiation of treatment between the dominant males in class and the others. Some examples described have been that "girls and women get less attention, less eyes contact, and less encouragement, female are more likely to be praised for their attractiveness or neatness, whereas males are more likely to be praised for their work and creativity"[93].

The studies about femininities and masculinities from a gender perspective point out that society consider the characteristics of masculinity more positive than those of femininity, as Margaret Mead showed and which is still very clear in the predominant work system. The study on the "Theory of gendered organizations" shows that: "The structure of the labour market, relations in the workplace, the control of the work process, and the underlying with age relation are always affected by symbols of gender, processes of gender identity, and material inequalities between women and men".[94]

That study showed that organizations are not gender neutral, these are based in a hierarchy structure, where the top positions are reserved for men and where the qualities considered the most important to achieve those positions are qualities attributed to masculinity. Moreover, gender roles shape the space in which men are seen as the bread

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[91] European Regeneration Areas Network, p.6
[92] Ibidem, p.4
[93] Kramarae and Spendeer, 2000, p.481.
[94] Acker, 1990, p.146

providers and women as the ones who take care of the house and children. Furthermore, the abstract notion of job requirement in our current system, which require full time dedication and job-centred lives, is more difficult to fit with the classic women role[95], as she is expected to take care of the house and children. This image may seem from the past, or at least, far away from the reality of "Western" countries, but we should question ourselves how much has it has changed in fact if women are still a big minority in top positions and if women still do a much higher percentage of "house tasks", at least in France as data show. This does not mean that women have not entered the labour market, but prejudges, stereotypes and old mentality could be the explanation of why women who are well prepared, do not enter in high positions or why they face more often the so-called "ceiling glass". Could it also be because the abstract notion of perfect worker fits the idea of masculinity characteristics, in sum, being a "men"? Breaking with stereotypes about men and women, could it help to break with these inside stereotypes of the work system? Should we enhance that the classical femininities characteristics are also equally valuable? It is a complex question, but some of the answers on valuing as much traditional femininity characteristics, such as empathy and emotional intelligence, for example, with traditional masculine characteristics, such as rationality or leadership, will help not only to achieve more gender equality, but also to enhance all human qualities that can be positive for the work and live in general. Nonetheless, I believe it is more common for women to try to achieve the classic male characteristics or to posses them, than the other way around, and this can be caused to the fact that male characteristics are, overall, still more valued.

The gender division of the structures of work mentioned above was still represented in the textbooks in France. A study of the French National institute for demographic studies (INED), from 2014, shows that there are more boys and men present in the textbooks, in some of them up to two-thirds, and they still portrait women "with domestic tasks or jobs – such as teachers or shop assistants – which correspond to their traditional nurturing role", while men "are shown in a wide range of occupations"[96]. It is evident that the reality in France is not that one, there are not 2/3

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[95]   Ibidem, p.159
[96]   Hamel and Rault, 2014,p.1

men, and women occupy a wide range of occupations as well. Nonetheless, what kind of repercussion can we think that this representation could still have? We cannot allow making women invisible.

We can conclude that there is a correlation between gender stereotypes attributed to females and males and the effect on the work system. If we focus on seeing different qualities as positive or negative indistinctly of the binary gender, these are usually related to, and if we include more into the *box* of positive qualities the ones which have been typically associated to femininity, such as emotional connexions, we could maybe achieve more equality. I think equality between men and women should not be achieved through having to correspond with the established masculinity notion, that is not equality, but by eliminating that notion of masculinity as the positive characteristic, and creating a more inclusive one. Moreover, if kids grew up learning that they can become whatever they want regardless their sex, and that there is not any expectation that they become one thing or another because of their sex, if they learned to think critically about the roles stereotypes around them, they would have more freedom of choice.

We can conclude that the fact that some roles are attributed to boys and others to girls can limit their free self-expression, by constraining them into such categories, and, moreover, these stereotypes have an impact on the future. We have seen the impact in the work world, as stereotypes also enforce ideas that some job are more suitable for men than for women and vice-versa: that the jobs with better recognition and salaries will be usually male-dominant, as the ones in high hierarchical positions, for example, and the fact that is more expected for women to take care of the house tasks and families. In addition, gender violence is also related to stereotypes, as many masculinities are built on the idea of violence and power superiority, and that women *belong* to them -coming as an expression of private property, as women used to be that and still do in many places-, as well as in the fact that the body of the women is specially objectified, with the media playing an important role in it. All these stereotypes limit both girls and boys and prevent from a full equality and non-discrimination between women and men, boys and girls. Stereotypes limit personal freedom and can create very strong discrimination and inequality structures. However,

they are deep encrusted in all societies, with different levels, and a must to achieve equality is to critically question them.

4. Description of the Gender Equality Education Program in France

We will explain now the French gender equality education program with more detail. There are 3 pillars that the Inter- ministerial Convention for equality between girls and boys established:

1 Acquire and transmit a culture of gender equality

2 Reinforce the education of mutual respect and equality between girls and boys, women and men.

3 Engage on a more mix educational and formational system in all the levels of education.[97]

Pillar 1: Acquire and transmit a culture of gender equality

This pillar has as first measure to "integrate on the courses educational actions and pedagogue support on the theme of gender equality". This covers different actions, such as to include a sheet about gender equality in the educational program; to encourage parity in the application for students representatives and for representatives of the schools; to engage in a reflection with book editors to avoid stereotypes, or to give students the necessary means to understand how the media portray women, and fight the sexist stereotypes that can be found in the media.

The second measure is to "Include education on equality and deconstruction of sexist stereotypes on the training of the educational stuff, teachers and orientation workers"

The third measure is to " Include actions of education on equality and deconstruction of sexist stereotypes on the on-going educational formation of educational stuff, professors and orientation workers". This includes a national plan of formation, which will develop a seminar or different actions of formation for

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[97] The follow gender equality education program is being translated from French to English by the author of this Thesis, with the parts under brackets being a literal translation and the others a synthesis of the official document (Convention interministérielle pour l'égalité entre les filles et les garçons, les femmes et les hommes dans le système éducatif 2013-2018)

professions mentioned *supra* about gender equality, stereotypes and fight against discriminatory actions. There is also a distance education program.

<u>Pillar 2: Reinforce the education of mutual respect and equality between girls and boys, women and men</u>

The idea behind this is "to construct a society where relations between both sex go into a direction of more equality, freedom and emancipation, from the very young age, the recognition of the respect for the dignity of the person and the absolute interdiction of any other behaviour"[98].

The first measure will be to "Better know and prevent situations linked to behaviour and violence of sexist and sexual character in the educative system". This will include measures like how to perceive sexist violence, measuring it at school, and impulse of prevention and sensitization modules related to sexual and sexist violence.

The second measure is to "Promote equality and mutual respect between sexes: prevent and react", with actions such as to include gender equality on the internal rules of schools, encourage the workers at school " to be an example" of good practices, to develop innovative mechanisms about the role of stereotypes from a very young age or to develop mechanism to listen and take into consideration the problems faced by students.

The third measure is to "Have an effective sexual education to develop equality between the sexes and access to contraception", which reaffirm the necessity of having different sessions of sexual education during the year. This will include prevention of discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

3   <u>Engage on a more mix educational and formational system in all the levels of education</u>

The idea underlined here is that girls and boys are still enclosed in stereotypes and roles depending on their sex, which also influence their professional career. Therefore, it is important to encourage students to increase their views on the different possibilities that they have. The public service of orientation will have to take into consideration the need to promote the mix of boys and girls, women and men in the

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[98] (My translation) Ibidem, Paragraph 29

different formation fields.[99]

The first measure consist on "reinforcing the knowledge of the paths of girls and boys and their professional insertion, ensuring their visibility and defining objectives for action", which will study, for example, obstacles concerning diversification of girls and boys and will promote equality in access to different careers through information, orientation and disclosure of the economic and labour world since high-school.

The second measure is to "exclude all sexist stereotypes in the information about jobs and formational careers"

The third measure is to "promote a mixed path of formation and professional sectors", again with all the necessary mechanisms to fight stereotypes and obstacles for the pursue of different careers, as well as coordination between the Minister of Women Rights and other Ministers to promote the formations that appear less attractive for girls or for boys.

Finally, to implement the Convention they have a committee of *pilotage* with representatives of each Minister participating in the Convention, as well as with experts designated by the Minister of Education and the Minister of Women Rights.

To sum up this program, we can pay attention to the conclusion of the French General Education Inspection about gender equality at school, who talking about this new education program, emphasizes that "is not about having a new priority at school, but is about better respond to one of its fundamental missions: to learn how to think critically against the fake evidences; to ensure the achievement of everyone; it is also to make school more efficient and to place it in the century we live"[100]. The way of enforcement of the new program is by including training at University level for the preparation of new teachers, as well as for new education inspectors, that receive modules on the subject. In addition, inspectors already working in the system will receive academic seminars as well, as they will have to evaluate on gender equality at their inspections. Moreover, some teachers, that, on a volunteer basis, received formation in 2013-2014 on this matter, could be asked to be part of the future formation

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[99] (My translation) Convention interministérielle pour l'égalité entre les filles et les garçons, les femmes et les hommes dans le système éducatif 2013-2018

[100] (My translation) Leroy et al, 2013, p.76

team of other teachers in their province[101]. There will also be an online training education platform available for teachers as well as different resources online, accessible for everyone. In addition, a syllabus of material to facilitate the inclusion of gender equality in the different subjects will be facilitated to the educational centres.

How this program is translated into practical effects on the everyday classes? The objective is to have "training sequences" on gender equality inside the different subjects[102]. An easy example could be History, where not only the masculine figures will be studied, but it will also focus on knowing more about the role of women, women figures in history or the evolution of women's rights (not only men's rights). All this can help to understand why women were almost none "present" in the political power through history, and to have a *complete* image of the subject. Therefore, gender will be mainstreamed in different subjects, which does not mean that all the classes will talk about gender, which is not the objective, but that it will be ensured that when gender comes into place, it will show the full picture, and not only a male-boy perspective. In addition, small exercises on gender-equality will be included in activities or subjects[103]. For example, in sports, they recommend an exercise of asking students what sport they prefer and why, and to ask students if they see situations in sport that they think are not egalitarian ones, as well as incentives the idea that everyone can dance or play football, for example. Another one is to ask students to chose the jobs they like, or dislike, from different illustrations provided, or the ones that they will like to do, and ask them to explain why, to justify their choices. As a last example, they will have to compare publicity ads and analyse the messages these send. There are many more examples on how to interact with gender stereotypes, and they all seem to have something in common; all of them ask the students to reflect, to think of the reasons behind their choices, these create critical minds, which is positive not only for gender equality, but for live in general. It is the idea of considering education not only as a way to receive information and memorize or learn that information, but also as a process focused on learning how to think critically. In this case, how to discover stereotypes and how to think "outside the box" by themselves. For teachers, an essential part of the program is

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[101] Hamon, 2014
[102]   (a) Le réseau de création et d'accompagnement pédagogiques
[103] Le réseau de création et d'accompagnement pédagogiques (b)

to be conscious of prejudges they may have and could transmit unintentionally[104]

5. Comparative study: related programmes in other countries

Many other countries around the world have programs for gender equality, inside European Union and outside, with different levels of engagement, from providing formation to teachers and revising the learning curriculum, to having a more inclusive plan, such as that of France has. Some countries, such as Sweden started "very" early, in the 80's, and some others more recently. It is important to see the global picture of what has been done by each country to advance in this matter, as we could see how France is positioned compared to the rest of the world.

We will start with Europe, the region in which France is included. Some examples are; Portugal, which started a program in 2008 to fight sexist stereotypes at school and which offered training for the professors[105]; Spain offers on-line training and electronic resources to promote gender-equality at schools for teachers, and the region of Andalusia has a specific gender equality education plan, since 2007[106]; Denmark provides books for different ages addressing the problem of stereotypes and fighting against sexism, since 2006[107]; Sweden, as early as in 1980 "was undergoing its third curriculum change to treat boys and girls equally and to challenge traditional roles"[108]. In 2006 we can also find a program to work on equality and discrimination problems in general, not only specifically on boys and girls [109]; in Belgium, the Wallonie-Bruxelles Federation has also developed a program to fight against stereotypes and to promote the mix of women and men in different professional paths since 2008[110], which includes projects from different nature, concerning the professional orientation of girls and boys or the edition of school books; Switzerland has also an education and a gender program for primary school with the aim of promoting equality[111] and Netherlands has focused on making girls more interested in science path[112]. Australia has a program for "Gender

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[104]   Boehringer, Ferrarese and Gay, 2014
[105]   European Commission,2013
[106]   Organización de los Estados Iberoaméricanos para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura
[107]   European Commission,2013
[108]   Kramarae and Spendeer, 2000, p.766
[109]   Jan, 2007
[110]   Adriaenssens, 2014 p.19.
[111]   Berner et al., 2015
[112]   European Commission (b), 2012, p.3

Equity and Future Opportunities" which applies in all levels of education since 2008, which aims to have a wide view; "understanding the issues of gender, class, aboriginality, race, culture and sexuality and how they impact on students and society"[113], as well as challenging those inequalities[114]. The program points out that, as we have seen in the France reports, achievements at school do not translate in same options for girls and boys after graduating. United States has had some "pro active" measures for non-sexist curriculum and training of teachers, but with a limit scale and founds.[115] In Canada, since mid-1990's "there was a real and visible presence to gender policies in the education domain", focused on encouraging the entry of girls into STEM careers and to "encourage the growth of females self-esteem and empowerment, and implement anti-harassment and anti-violence initiatives"[116], in addition to the creation of non sexist and stereotypical curriculum and conferences and lessons on topics related to gender equality. In the last years they have also realized the need to include a transversal program with the topics of "race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and disability"[117]. However, what may remain unknown is the fact that later on "teachers were criticized for emphasizing equity and social justice goals at the expense of individual merit and the academic rigour that would bring outstanding results"[118]. Therefore, the "logic of the market" was emphasized, considering that equality and social justice values were taking *too much time* of the education program. However, the real message seems to be that is not *convenient* for the economic system in place to engage in those values. However, some teachers "have kept explicit discourses of gender equity alive in their classrooms"[119].

Many of the programs implemented in developing countries have still their focus on achieving more equity in the percentage of boys and girls at school, targeting specially those groups more vulnerable for this goal, such as children in rural areas[120], as they have not met that objective yet. Examples of these programmes can be found in

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[113]   Australian Education Union, 2008, p.2
[114]   Ibidem, p.4
[115]   Bank, 2007, p.766
[116]   Ibidem, p. 748
[117]   Ibidem, p. 748
[118]   Ibidem, p. 749
[119]   Ibidem, p. 750
[120]   Ibidem, p.766

Peru, Bangladesh or India[121], but we have to consider that this is also one of the Millennium Development Goals, which means that programmes in this regard should be found in many countries.

Nonetheless, in Latin America there has been also further progress on gender equality education programmes. Argentina, as early as in 1993, had a General Education Law, which "incorporate the principle of equal opportunity and the eradication of sexual stereotypes in educational materials"[122]. Paraguay has policies on curriculum change, as well as specific modules for equality. In Bolivia it was done as a crosscutting principle in the curriculum, which was also included with other subjects of non-discrimination -race, ethnicity, poverty, among others-, and in 2002 they started training teachers. Chile has also gender equality as a crosscutting principle, and since 1994 all textbooks are required to represent gender equality.[123] In Mexico there has been efforts to "incorporate the gender dimension in educational programmes and initiatives; the content of free textbooks for primary education has been analysed from a gender equality perspective, teachers and school administrators were also trained to think and act consistently with gender equality principles."[124] Nonetheless, in all countries we will have to analyse possible problems of implementation, as whether or not they have funds to actually train the teachers and effectively implement the policy; the written norm or policy and its execution can vary significantly.

Nelly P. Stromquist mentions that in general there is little compliance with the education measures to have gender equality, and she explains three hypotheses on this regard. The first one is that the "policies are unclear and civil servants, untrained in gender issues, are unable to translate the new legislation into specific guidelines"[125]. The second one is that there is not enough feminist pressure to establish the programmes. The third one is that "states continue to be male and patriarchal"[126] and that the gender equality is only regarded as a symbolic action, it "may serve only as useful 'illusions'"[127]. The conclusion of the author is that not only measures need to be

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[121] Ibidem, p.766
[122] Ibidem, p.767
[123] Bank, 2007, p.767
[124]   OECD, 2011,p.27
[125] Bank, 2007, p.769
[126]   Ibidem, p.769
[127]   Ibidem, p.769

specific, but also proper training would need to be effectuated, with large knowledge about what gender means.

Broadly speaking, we did not see many protests against these education measures. One reason could be that in some countries the general population were not aware of these changes, another is that some of the changes were not so substantial or visible, but it can also be that society did receive these policies in a positive way, as it should not be so problematic to accept programmes which promote gender equality in a country, it could be even celebrated. Nonetheless, this does not mean that this kind of institutional change is always easy. Experts have determined that to establish consensus on education will be difficult between the different actors involved, which include "administrators, teachers, parents, and pupils"[128], and "particularly when the policy in question is controversial, as gender policies inevitably are"[129]. In addition, the author explains that when there are policies that "threaten" privilege of white males, "opposition to them has come from all levels of the political and society hierarchy"[130] .We have the example of institutional resistance. For example, in the United States President Reagan was against the Congress concerning a norm that introduced more equality and non-discrimination at school, and did not allow it[131]. In other countries, we have seen that when a new political party arrives and majorities in Parliament change, they change education laws[132]. We can mention the case described *supra* of Canada, and we will see that in Spain it also happened in relation to a course concerning Human Rights.

Having said so, there are very similar precedents to the case of France. In Argentina, back in the 90's, the Catholic Church opposed the measures for gender equality at school that we mentioned *supra,* with arguments similar than those used in France: "they would destroy the family and encourage homosexuality by questioning 'natural differences between men and women'"[133]. In this case, the Church, which had power to develop part of the curriculum, won the battle and in 1995 the program was

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[128] Bank, 2007, p.712
[129] Bank, 2007, p.712
[130] Ibidem, p.712
[131] Ibidem, p.713
[132] Ibidem, p.713
[133] Ibidem p. 767

abolished[134].   Moreover, not only in Argentina, but also in all the region of Latin America, the Catholic Church has had influence in education and in stopping the advance of feminist movements, which would call for non-discrimination and equality, being the Church the one *ensuring* the role of "moral authority" in the content of education[135].   This is the other side of the coin that we face when progressive changes try to take place.

Italy is also facing a similar situation as the one France had, but with a program for sexual education at school. In almost all countries of Europe this kind of education had been in place for a relatively long time, including in France[136]. However, in Italy the 20 of June of 2015 there was a protest against having this education program and against having civil union for two persons of the same sex[137]. The opposition to the program is connected to the fact that it will address the topics of sexual orientation and gender identity, and that is why the most conservative groups and the Church have opposed it, mentioning that it attacks the 'family' and society[138]. Moreover, false rumours against the program had been spread, - the same as what happened in France-, and in this case they indicate that "boys will be forced to cross- dressing as girls and vice-versa" at school[139]. The church in Italy may play bigger role than in France, and some media mentioned how the "religious lobby" is trying to stop the program[140]. It is curious how the arguments against these programmes which do not pleased the conservative sectors are seen as being against the "family" and how there are, many times, religious institutions and religious groups which are in the first line of defence of conservative ideas and against progressive changes.

It is relevant to mention that Spain also went through a similar situation to that of France, when in 2006 a program called "Education for the citizenship and Human Rights" was introduced, following a recommendation from the Council of Europe, and which addressed values of non discrimination, respect for diversity or participation on democracy, among others. It caused a major controversy in the country, and there were

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[134]   Provoste Fernández, 2006,p.18
[135]   Ibidem, p. 14
[136]   Pasciuti, 2015
[137]   Eduati, 2015
[138]   Il Fatto Quotidiano, 2015
[139]   (My own translation) Radio Vaticana, 2015
[140]   Ibidem

also some protests against it and some parents decided not to send their children to school, defending it as a matter of "conscientious objection". This was finally denied by the Supreme Court as a legal possibility to object this program[141]. The program, which was introduced by the Socialist Party (PSOE), was removed by the Conservative Party (PP) in 2011,and replaced by a new one eliminating substantive contents from the previous one, such as in references to homosexuality or issues of social inequalities[142], as well as the mention of "Human Rights" in the title of the program[143]. It is a similar circumstance to that of France, a program that address issues of Human Rights, recommended by many International norms (such as UDHR), but which was politicized and opposed by conservative groups and by representatives of the Catholic Church. The main criticisms came also because of the explanation of diversity of families in the program, explaining that they can be formed by people from the same sex. In addition, critics from the Church declared that the State wanted to impose "secularism"[144] [145]. Representative of the Catholic Forum for the Family called for parents to object the program. In general, it was seen as a matter of teaching views from "the political left" and pointing out that school should not teach "moral values", as it is the right of the parents to decide on that. These ideas and defence are the same ones that appeared in France with the gender equality education program, as we will see. It is also interesting that in the debate in Spain, the program was referred in the media and by the public opinion as " Education for the citizenship", but the last part of the title, "Human Rights", was barely mentioned. We can see the same in France, even if those programs are issues of Human Rights, the language of Human Rights is not present. It is forgotten that these came from Human Rights duties and recommendation, and they are seen as simply political choice. It is a political choice to follow Human Rights, but it is also an international obligation, and this part seems to be neglected or not taken into consideration. Moreover, each choice in education can be seen as an ideological one and with certain political perspective. It is also interesting how the religious groups in Spain were also against the program, as in France. It shows how intrinsic are the gender roles

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[141] Aunión, 2012
[142] Ibidem
[143] Prats
[144] Libertad Digital, 2007
[145] Aunión and Álvarez, 2012

and patriarchal rules within certain religious groups, even if this does not mean that all religious people follow them. In addition, what happened in Spain when the subject was removed by the conservative party, could make us think about what could happen in France if government party change, could another party end this program? It is a way to exemplify how Human Rights improvements are never "safe", and there can be regression in many different areas. In Canada, there was also a shift with the increased neo-liberalism, which asked to focus less on equity and social justice and more on the "markets necessities". However, because of the commitment of teachers, we have seen that many decided to keep this discourse alive. Nonetheless, it is different to have an institutionalised program, envisaging a specific time for it, with specific mechanisms, and which is included in a general curriculum, from having teachers which take the importance of gender equality on their own, but still, teachers which not reproduce stereotypes, which create non sexist environments and which make their students think and be critic. These can make a huge change, -even if not so strong as with all the other tools to reinforce it-. As we will see with the evaluation of the pilot program, it is important to remember that those programs are implemented by people, and their level of commitment with it produces different impacts.

6.Challenges of the program "A, B, C, D for equality" and consequences

As we have anticipated, the pilot program in France faced difficulties. The gender equality program, called " A, B, C, D for equality", started to be implemented in 2013 in 247 different schools in France, in 10 regions: Bordeaux, Clermont-Ferrand, Créteil, la Corse, la Guadeloupe, Lyon, Montpellier, Nancy-Metz, Rouen and Toulouse [146]. Conservative groups in France opposed this idea and started to create a boycott and false rumours about the program. The same group of people who participated in "La Manif pour tous", a collective in opposition to same sex marriage in France, also protested against this gender equality education program, as they also considered that the program will attempt against their morals, values and ways of perceiving society. Parents received messages not to send their children to school as an opposition to the "A, B, C, D for equality" program, in the dates of 24 and 27 of January 2014 [147]. This

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[146]   Hamon, 2014
[147]   Battaglia and Le Bars, 2014

was the message sent: "*Le choix est simple, soit on accepte la « théorie du genre » (ils vont enseigner à nos enfants qu'ils ne naissent pas fille ou garçon mais qu'ils choisissent de le devenir!!! Sans parler de l'éducation sexuelle prévue en maternelle à la rentrée 2014 avec démonstration et apprentissage de la masturbation dès la crèche ou la halte-garderie…), soit on défend l'avenir de nos enfants*."

The translation will be: " The choice is simple, either we accept the" gender theory "(they will teach our children that they are not born male or female, but they choose to become!!! Not to mention the planned sex education kindergarten in September 2014 with demonstration and learning of masturbation from the kindergarten), or we defend the future of our children."

It is also explained that a way of mobilisation of Catholic people was done through diffusion of e-mails, which could be found in the network of Churches and religious associations.[148]

One of the main figures of the boycott was Farida Belghoul, a History teacher. She was one of the figure against racism in the 80's, in the "marche de Beurs"[149]. However, now she occupies a position in a extreme right association "d'Égalité et réconciliation"[150], and she was one of the strongest voices against the "A, B, C, D for equality". She organized the boycott and created a web page of "association of parents engaged and with courage", to oppose this program and to develop a movement against "gender theory", of which they accused the government to be doing. She also indicated that the program was something coming from the "lobby trans, bi and cie" and a war against families in France[151]. Farida Belghoul has rejected to have interviews with the media. She faced an administrative complaint because of lack of loyalty of civil servants[152], as she is a public teacher calling for parents not to send children to school. It is also interesting to know that, after being a teacher, she decided to teach her daughters at home as she dislike the public education in France[153]. She was also asked into Court

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[148] Roucaute, 2013
[149] Cocquet, 2014
[150] Fédération de parents autonomes et courageux (FAPEC) (a)
[151] Battaglia, 2014
[152] L'Humanité, 2014
[153] Mestre and Zappi, 2014

for defamation, after the complaint of a teacher because Belghoul posted a video saying that at the school in France, where this teacher works, there was "a teacher who asked the children to touch themselves". The video ended with the sentence "fight or die"[154], in reference to the movement against the education program.

Alain Soral, the president of the association of extreme right "Égalité et réconciliation", has also been working for this fight against "A, B, C, D for equality" with Farida Belghoul. This organization presented articles like the one with the following title "Women are crazy", where they called the program "A, B, C, D for equality"; "A, B, C, D of homosexuality" and where they said that it would teach kids "rape, prostitution, masturbation and exhibition"[155]. They have created the idea that there is a "gender theory" that is equal to an evil plan made by government to mess with the children and traditional values, and they accused this 'theory' of any kind of thing. They were sending the message that gender equality is against the interest of children and families and they explicitly invented many of the things about program content.

Jean-François Copé, member of one of the main political parties in France, "*Union pour un mouvement populaire*" (UMP), has said that he "understood why parents are concerned" about the program, and he also said that he is against the "gender theory" and he accused the (socialist) government of wanting to implement it[156]. Nonetheless, he said later on that he did not support the boycott of non-sending the children to school. He has also affirmed that if UMP governed, they would abolish the same-sex marriage and the possibility for homosexual people to adopt[157]. He argued that his political party defended the equality between men and women, but he refused the supposed "gender theory" of the education program. He said also that he was not against the union of homosexuals, but he is against the name of marriage. The messages of UMP can be contradictory and can be seen as trying to boycott the socialist projects for equality. It can be part of the political game to accuse their project on education – to create opposition and criticize the political party in power- as they proposed a similar

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[154] Battaglia and Ouzoulias, 2015
[155] Égalité et Réconciliation, 2014
[156] France Inter, 2014
[157] E.D.H- Egalité des Droits, 2013

education program in 2011[158]. In any case, it is important to keep in mind that this political party represents almost half of the electorate in France, with a result of the 48,37 %[159] in the last national legislative elections in 2012, which means that is very influential, and count with a large support of the population in France.

Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, which was the Minister of Women Rights when the program "A, B, C, D for equality" started, and is now the Minister of National Education[160], defended the importance of gender equality and the fact that the school is a place to teach the values of the Republic, -being equality part of them-. She remarked how essential the program is, and the fact that it would be implemented in all schools. In addition, she has been trying to explain what the program is really about –equality between girls and boys-, to clarify 'miss-understandings', pointing out how the "detractors" of the program have been creating false rumours about it to create polemic.

Different media said that after the protests and boycott, government went backwards and suspended "A, B, C, D for equality". They have been accused of changing the project to calm the polemic[161][162]. The truth is that the web page of "A, B, C, D for equality" cannot be found anymore, but there is another web page with information about the general education program to have equality between girls and boys. The title of "A, B, C, D for equality" is not there because this was a pilot program[163], as the Minister Najat Vallaud-Belkacem explained, and now we can find information about the generalisation of the program to all schools. Currently, the name of the program can be found as "Action Plan for equality between girls and boys at School"[164]. That Minister also explained that this kind of test at education levels were very common, as before generalizing the changes they have to have a pilot program to be able to monitor the results. She said that, for this pilot program, the evaluation was very positive[165] The evaluation of the pilot program was done by the General Inspectors on Education in 2014, and it underlined that it has allowed teachers to be conscious

[158]   RTL (a), 2014
[159]   Le Monde (Electoral Results)
[160]   Both Ministers were involved in the creation of the education program.
[161]   Video of Actuality TV Program *On n'est pas couché*
[162]   Arsenault, 2014
[163]   Video Actuality TV Program *On n'est pas couché*
[164]   Hamon, 2014
[165] Video Actuality TV Program *On n'est pas couché*

about their professional behaviour in class, and to modify their practice in order to ensure the same rights and chances were provided to girls and boys. However, it also indicate that some improvements needed to be done, as on the resources available for the program, the accompaniment of the teachers and the better explanation to them of the tools of the program.[166], as we will see with more detail in this paper.

We will explore now in detail the arguments defended against having a gender education program.

The report on the pilot education program made by the French National General Inspectors explains some of the reasons for the negative reactions by certain parents; "While some have acted for ideological reasons or linked to religious reasons, explicitly or not *confessed* to the teacher(s), others found themselves challenged in their educational concepts; so this was an opportunity for some parents to express disagreement on the subject of equality between girls and boys and to assert their conception that there is a different status of children precisely based on their sexual identity"[167]. This means that some parents are in favour of gender stereotypes and differences between girls and boys and do not want to see that change, -based on their religion, ideology or simply general ideas-.

An important argument against the program is that "it sacrifices the right of parents to educate their children as they wish, in name of the fight against discrimination", as exposed by Grégor Puppinck[168]. This is a complex issue. In the article 2 of the first Protocol to the European Human Rights Convention it is established that; "No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions." Nonetheless, to what extent the State has to respect that the education provided is in conformity to the religion and philosophical views of the parents? And how should this be combined with all the international recommendations, including the ones from the Council of Europe, in favour of an

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[166] Hamon, 2014
[167] (My translation) Bouysse, 2014, p.14
[168] (My own translation). He has been Director of a Law and Justice Centre, he had teach Human Rights and he is also part of a religious order (Roucaute, 2013)

education free of sexist stereotypes? A case from the European Human Rights Court, concerning sexual education in Denmark, clarifies this issue. The Court has specified, in the case of Kjeldsen, Busk Madsen and Pedersen v. Denmark, "the second sentence of Article 2 of the Protocol does not prevent States from imparting through teaching or education information or knowledge of a directly or indirectly religious or philosophical kind. It does not even permit parents to object to the integration of such teaching or education in the school curriculum, for otherwise all institutionalised teaching would run the risk of proving impracticable. In fact, it seems very difficult for many subjects taught at school not to have, to a greater or lesser extent, some philosophical complexion or implications"[169]

The movements who are against the program defend the idea that stereotypes are positive, that girls should learn how to behave in a certain way and boys in another certain way. Farida Belghoul accused the 'gender theory' to be "against nature"[170]. They deny that there are stereotypes and they believe that differences in the way of acting between boys and girls are simply natural. In the web-page created by Farida Belghoul to fight against the education program, it is affirmed that there is a natural behaviour that boys play with cars and girls with dolls, and that the "LGTB lobby"[171] should not *push* kids to do otherwise. They explicitly deny that a person who has certain sex can have a gender identity, which is different from that sex[172], which will be the case of transsexual people. They believe that this education program is the result of the lobby LGTBIQ, in a negative sense. Moreover, they criticize the fact that there be information on sexual and gender orientation in high-school, and that "even" a phone number and web-site be provided on the textbooks for the students who need someone to talk about these issues[173]. It denotes not only sexism, but also clear homophobia and transphobia. Therefore, their argument comes back to the idea that only parents should educate their kids on 'theses issues', not the school, as it was exposed before.

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[169]   The European Court of Human Rights, 1976, Paragraph 53
[170]   Fédération de parents autonomes et courageux (FAPEC) (b)
[171]   LGTB stands for Lesbians, Gays, Transsexuals and Bisexuals. However, in my thesis I would make reference to the community of LGTBIQ, which stands for Lesbians, Gays, Transsexuals, Bisexuals, Intersex and Queers.
[172] Ibidem

[173]   Ibidem

A problem when analysing the reasons against the program is that there were many false rumours about it, which maybe explains why some people were against it, not due to the real program, but to those false rumours. However, if we take into account, for example, the well-diffused text message sent to parents, where it is described that little children will learn how to masturbate and they will have a demonstration in class, we can see that it is clearly non-sense. It could be that the people who sent those messages knew, in reality, that this was not true, or at least they knew that they made out those ideas, as it does not appear anywhere in the program. Therefore, could be just a tactic to scare parents and create fear and polemic, rather than the reason to opposed the program. In addition, it would be as well surprising if many parents did believe that message could be true. Maybe they did not believe some of the extreme rumours, but in some of them, and this was enough to panic or create strong doubts about the pilot program.

Detractors believe that the education program intention is to impose an ideology, the ideology of the "gender theory". They do not acknowledge gender studies as being part of an academic development, and interdisciplinary area of study, but they believe this is an ideology. Is there a "gender ideology"? Some scholars make references to the fact that there are different "gender ideologies", which will be from an ideology which supports traditional gender roles and inequality to an ideology that supports neutral and equal roles not based on gender differences[174]; there will be a "Gender Ideology Scale" between those two positions[175]. Nonetheless, when used by the detractors of the education program, "gender ideology," means the ideology that challenges gender stereotypes, without acknowledging that there can be different 'gender ideologies'. It is more common to refer to a feminist ideology, in the sense that it will aim for changes in the social, economic and political power towards full gender equality and non-discrimination, but even so, there are also different feminist ideologies. On the other hand, "gender studies" is a multidisciplinary discipline, not an ideology.

In any case, two points should be underlined. First of all, gender equality is by itself part of the Human Rights core, from the cross-principle of non-discrimination and

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[174] Kroska, 2007
[175] Ungaretti and Etchezahar, 2013

equality, to its recognition in different treaties, such as CEDAW. This seems to be totally unknown by the public discourse on this thematic. It also seems that is not so well outspoken by the Government, even if it may not make a difference (We could also ask ourselves if Human Rights can also be seen as 'ideological', but this would lead to a another paper).

Secondly, they affirm that teaching a 'gender theory', teaching about 'gender', is ideological, but what they completely fail to see is that, actually, at school, they do teach kids about gender, all the time. As some sociologists from Toulouse Jean-Jaurès University have affirmed, at school they teach about normative values of society and stereotypes, and "defending the "natural" difference of sexes, promoting the heterosexual family and opposing the marriage for all? This is also to teach a vision of gender, and in a very explicit way"[176]. Kramarae and Spendeer determine that "education allows people to reach their full potential within the value system of their culture"[177]. Moreover, they point out how "patriarchal values are reinforced by the content of basic literature programs in most of political systems. Even in countries where schooling is universal, schools can define and reinforce gender roles and identity through the curriculum, teacher's attitudes" [178] As we have mentioned before, many textbooks in France still represented traditional stereotypical roles of men and women and more men/boys than women/girls are presented in the illustration, but this representation cannot even be justified as a *simple representation* of reality, as there are not 2/3 men and boys in France[179], but 1/2, and women do a variety of professions. These representations influence on children and they cannot be justified. It is evident that a change has to be made to represent a "complete picture". In addition, we have also seen how school plays an important role in the socialisation of people, including gender socialisation, so the question should be what kind of values we want to teach at school, not if we 'teach' about gender or not.

We have seen the main arguments opposed to the education program, but we have also seen the contra-arguments, as well as all the International Human Rights

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[176] (My translation) Boel et. Al, 2015
[177] Kramarae and Dale Spendeer, 2000,p.472
[178] Ibidem
[179] Hame and Rault, p.1

recommendations to include this type of education program, and the sociological perspectives about why it is so important to include equality values, non discrimination and to challenge sexist stereotypes at school. Therefore, my conclusion on our first question of the thesis is that it is, indeed, very necessary to have this kind of gender equality education program; it has been a very positive step of France in the realization of gender equality. However, even if we acknowledge that having a program is necessary and positive, we also have to analyse how was implemented, if the specific content that we have seen is useful and if the program can reach its objectives of gender equality.

First, we have to acknowledge that it is too soon to evaluate results in terms of changes of perceptions of the students and its impact on gender equality in general. Nonetheless, we have an evaluation made by the General Inspectors of National Education which points out some of the criticisms on the implementation of the pilot program "A, B, C, D for equality" and the ways to solve them when implementing the general program. The general overview of the evaluation is nonetheless positive, and the recommendation is to generalise the program to all levels of education -from 'maternelle' (starting with the age of 2-3 years) to the 'baccalauréat', ending with 18 years[180], as gender equality is a priority and the schools should always be vigilant of it[181]. It is also underlined that they do not have a previous evaluation of the situation in the schools that followed the pilot program, which also makes it harder to see the effects of the change[182].

The main issue they detected was a communication problem, and the lesson learnt is to communicate directly with the parents about what is the real content of the program[183]. It could be a problem that the online platform with concrete pedagogic measures was "too" diverse. Finally, they also pointed out the problem that the protests, called « journées de retrait des élèves » (days of non attendance of students), did cause profound problems of interference with the pilot program.[184]

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[180]   Minister of National Education of France (a), 2015
[181]   (My translation) Bouysse, 2014,p.6
[182]   (My translation) Ibidem, p.5
[183]   (My translation) Ibidem, pp.6-7
[184]   (My translation) Ibidem, p.3

The most relevant recommendations were[185];

1   To be "precise in the meaning of the value of equality in education", and to "mobilize teachers for awareness on their action"[186].

2   To be precise in the programmes with a explicit content for equality between girls and boys

3   Re-organize the sources available and ensure an initial step as well as continue formation.

4   Communication with parents

We can see that the need of precision and communication are the key issues. In terms of communication, it seems efforts have been made to improve this with the parents. The Official web pages change continuously, probably to adapt or to try to increase their efficiency. I have seen changes during my research from March 2015 to July 2015, but the current configuration has a section called "Relations School/ Families", which aims to have a constructive dialogue with the parents[187].

The original problem of communication was caused because of lack of prevention; they did not imagine such repercussion. Moreover, the schools which did not make part of the pilot implementation of the program were even less prepared when they encountered the boycott and the absences of children following the protests: they had no information to provide[188].

Parents federations did not have enough information either. They had a communication from the Ministers of Women, and later on by the one of Education, but not specifying which schools and what type of concrete measures will be, this explain that their role was limited when the controversies exploited.[189]

Moreover, formation of teachers, even if positive, was not deep enough, and therefore, they did not have enough resources to 'buffer' the effects of the protest.

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[185] Ibidem, - all of the recommendations can be found in page 6-
[186] Abide, p.6
[187] Le réseau de création et d'accompagnement pédagogiques (CANOPE)(c)
[188] Bouysse, 2014, p.18
[189] Ibem

Inspectors could observe differences between some schools and others, on the degree of engagement of the high responsible[190], but also, it is mentioned that the effect of the project will be different when the ones in charge of implementing it, teachers, do believe in it and embrace it or when they follow it as a matter of obligation[191]. Kramarae and Spendeer say, referring to non-sexist education, that "it has been found that programmes will have little effect if the teacher is not personally committed to sex equity and is not able to convey this commitment with conviction"[192]. This is evident; many times one of the first steps for teachers is to realize if they really act in an equal way with girls and boys and if they transmit some sexist stereotypes. The majority of teachers believed in the program and the need for real gender equality, they are willing to implement it. However, there are teachers who may not be in concordance with it. Teachers have to be willing to take conscious of these issues, and if someone do not believe in the project, it would be difficult to implement it as she/he should, as an opinion and personal change would be required in this situation, and it is not always so easy to convince someone on the importance of gender equality she/he believes otherwise. A possible solution could be having a very convincing formation on the need of the program, as well as a good supervision of the program at school level. The way to prepare teachers is through a mechanism to help them "to be conscious about their own attitudes connected to prejudges and stereotypes, knowing how to repair and analyse school situations which produce inequalities, to have a pedagogic practice of better equality treatment, learn how teacher construct sexist stereotypes and to contribute to their deconstruction" [193]. It is important that in the way to do so, we do not treat teachers as "sexist", but we just try to point out how we all can have unconscious stereotypes and we have to become aware of them. The report stressed that the formation of teachers was considered overall very positive, even if it was only for one or two days. One of the problems was, again, the lack of preparation of teachers on how to communicate these changes with parents and how to respond to their concern with solid arguments.[194]

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[190]   Ibidem, p.3
[191]   Ibidem, p.5
[192]   Kramarae and Spendeer, 2000, p.506
[193]   (My translation) Bouysse, 2014p.6
[194]   (My translation) Ibidem, pp.6-8

I also consider very relevant the fact that not all the teachers who were part of the experimental program did attend this formation, as there were other formations at the same time. I think it should have been mandatory, as it is essential to have a minimum formation on this topic. In addition, some teachers considered that they did not have enough formation time.[195] Nevertheless, in an official video made by the National Education General Inspector Christopher Marsollier, he said that even if not all teachers had a long formation in the subject, "we have to give them the confidence"[196] that they will know how to use the resources available.

Concerning the online resources with practical dynamics on how to implement the program, -the "training sequences" explained *supra*-, many of the teachers informed that they used them as inspiration, in the sense that they adopted them to their way of teaching or they created similar ones. These local creations could be provided again to be included at national level, after a critic review.[197] It was also established that the sequences needed to be more clear and specific in what the objective of each one was.

It is relevant to underline that the program pay attention not only to have non-sexist and critical material, but to the way in which lessons are given, which is an indispensable aspect. It has been studied that teachers can have different treatment to boys and girls, to children part of majorities or minorities. It has been called the "chilly climate effect", as explained before in this Thesis. To change this, teachers explained that they took conscious of letting speak the same percentage of girls and boys in class, to avoid mentioning stereotypical or sexist examples and to engage in 'philosophical' discussions about the meaning of equality, as well as in "educative discussion" when they listen sexist comment such as "he cries like a girl"[198].

Inspectors criticized that in the overall 'good' material of conferences about gender equality and in the official page of the program, there were also "militant discourses"[199]. We do not know which one they make reference to, or what they

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[195] (My translation) Ibidem, p.7
[196] Video of the National Education General Inspector Christopher Marsollier
[197] (My translation) Ibidem, p.9
[198] Bouysse, 2014, p. 20
[199] Ibidem, p.12

understand a militant discourse is. Other problems underlined were more technical, concerning the distribution and organization of the different materials.

Experts in gender and education have pointed out dynamics that can be relevant when implementing this type of education. Kramarae and Spender, when talking about non-sexist education programs, say that "in general, girls are more affected by non-sexist interventions than are boys, who often resist changes in their position"[200]. In any case, Barbara J.Bank has revealed some interesting factors concerning gender socialisation and break of stereotypes; some studies explained that "by three years of age, most children understand and practice gender differences that are culturally produced in the adult world"[201]. This can be seen as playing with different toys. However, recent studies show that boys and girls also want to play with what is considered to be toys *for* the opposite sex, but they "tend to keep this desire secret and play with them covertly if they have peers who are traditionally gendered"[202]. The problem is that children who move from traditional gender roles can be attacked or marginalized by their group peers, and this is due to the fact that "many pre-school children find gender violations (crossing the gender boundaries e.g. girls doing boys' things or wearing boys' things) to be as serious as violating moral rules such as lying or taking a toy"[203]. Therefore, this author concludes that "gender inequalities in education arise from children learning traditional and stereotyped roles that limit what they consider appropriate for gender"[204]. This shows that, having a program which is critical with stereotypes since a very young age is needed, and also that, the education program has to target this specific situations that could happen, as children do not learn about roles only at school, and the teacher will have to make an effort in de-constructing this stereotypes and make children think about why should it be wrong to not follow girls/boys traditional roles.

Nonetheless, Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott mention that some studies start showing that small children "play with different ways of being feminine or masculine"

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[200]   Kramarae and Dale Spendeer, 2000, p.507
[201]   Ibidem, p.12
[202]   Ibidem, p. 264
[203]   Ibidem, p.265
[204]   Ibidem, p.265

and that there is "greater fluidity and complexity, allowing different constructions of gender and more varied patterns of gendered social interaction"[205]: "not everyone stays firmly within the gender category to which they are assigned in infancy."[206] This can be the reason why some authors criticize the concept of socialisation itself, as Stanley and Wise, which believe that it "seems overly deterministic": "people are presented as totally passive and totally malleable and entirely determined by 'society'". Moreover, the model *accepts* that there are "variants", people who do not fit with the model, and the explanation is that there was a *failure* in the process of socialization[207]. I believe this way of seeing this is, in fact, simplistic, and we can take into consideration that the person plays a role in his/her socialisation, influenced by his/her context, as we have argued before in this Thesis.

The General Inspectors report also includes a significant part of reflection about the protest and its consequences to the program implementation. The protests affected the normal course of the pilot program. Many schools took it by surprise, not knowing with enough time what was going on. The opponents of the pilot program did even manage to have a list with all the teachers involved in the program, and some of them even received calls with false information regarding the cancellation of the pilot.[208]

The education centres tried to react, to meet parents as soon as possible. However, it was not always possible to make the communication with enough time, and the protest considerably affected as well those schools that were not part of the pilot program. The official web page of the Minister of Women reacted by publishing explanations to clear the false rumours[209]. Some teachers explained they felt disappointed and powerless; some of them thought they had a confidence link with parents, a solid trust, and they realized it was not always like that[210]. It must have been difficult to carry the best type of pilot program when knowing that the reactions of some parents were contrary to it, and that a considerable quantity of false rumours was trying to boycott the program.

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[205] Stevi and Scott, Sue, 2002,p.270
[206] Ibidem, p.271
[207] Liz and Wise, 2002,p.277
[208] Bouysse, 2014, pp.13-14
[209] Ibidem, p.14
[210] Ibidem

The issue of the protest revealed a very specific and delicate question, which is the fact that for some children, what they learn at school can be very distant from their culture at home, from the values their parents teach. The report makes references to the case of minorities, with diverse culture. How to deal with this issue? A question is "What to do in order not to give the impression to the kids-students that the school judges the practices that they live regularly in their family?"[211]. Nonetheless, I would like to add that, to a certain extent, this would be a "problem" for all children, as sexism is still in place in society, everywhere, from publicity to television, in different degrees, and in each family the stereotypes can be different, but I think that, if well implemented, they could face this situations of inequality "outside the school". Moreover, the report reflects that this happens not only with the question of equality between men and women, but it can be a sort of 'conflict' with other issues learnt at school. The program can be sensitive to the way of teaching these topics, but the fact that some families have more traditional roles does not mean their children cannot have a different education at school. I believe it is normal, as well, that new generations challenge older generations.

In addition, I think that schools could also collaborate with parents, not only to explain what the program is about, as mentioned *supra*, but to try to explain why actions and narratives of the family are also important in the general goal to prevent sexist stereotypes and discrimination. This is a sensitive question; school and teachers, cannot say how parents have to educate children at home, it is a legal matter and people would not appreciate this kind of 'sermon'. However, there could be informative talks on the importance of these matters and how many sexist stereotypes that we transmit are unconscious. There could be talks based on a voluntary base, of course, but collaboration with families could help to avoid these contradictions in many cases, and maybe some parents would be able to make an effort when realizing the importance of stereotypes.

The report says that in the first format of the Internet site, there were only women in the conferences videos and in the visual documents, which was a problem. The report said that the program "was seen as a will of feminist militant", as a criticism. Would that imply that it would be "incorrect" if the program were a feminist will? I

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[211] Ibidem

believe it is, maybe you can call it otherwise, but how can we avoid being feminist if we want to have an education that fights against stereotypes to achieve more gender equality? The fact that it can be seen as 'feminist', however, should not be a criticism. It is odd the ambivalent way the report uses this term, and how there is a tremendous fear of the word "feminism". It seems that, even if the government adopts a policy that can be itself feminist; they are "terrified" by the word. It seems that mentioning militant feminism is talking about a "radicalism" which is not present, *cannot* be present, in the socialist party of France.   The report says how, when teachers mention "gender" equality, the mere reference to gender scares the *general public*, but if they talk about "equality between girls and boys", their fair diminishes or disappears. Therefore, due to what they call "the symbolic and fantasmatic burden of certain notions associated with the concept "gender" and the relative youth of it for the general public have to engage us in the prudence"[212]. We could debate here, the importance of the language of human rights versus its implementation. If the goal is equality between girls and boys, does it matter the language used for it? I think it denotes a problem the fact that the 'general public' is so scared of certain concepts, but perhaps it is because of the lack of knowledge of it, that is what it shows, but where does this fair come from, if people simply do not know about it? Could it be because of the misinformation campaign of the detractors of the program? Should the Government clarify those concepts, and explain what gender equality means? A fact, which is indeed true, is that there is a very broad variety of theories related to gender, as well as wide variety of feminist theories. Those can be simplified, but nonetheless, if they want to simplify 'everything', the direct way could be to talk about "equality between girls and boys", as the report mentions. However, the report explains that also "equality" is seen as *suspicious* by many parents, by many citizens in France, because it seems to be a synonym of "identical, indistinct"[213], which would mean abolishing the differences between girls and boys, and this is not perceived as positive, explain the report. I believe that, what this simply shows, is a sexist behaviour, that the reason why some people dislike the word "equality" is because they do not want *real* equality, they like those differences between women and men. This shows different level of power and relations. The opposition can

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[212]   Ibidem, p. 17.
[213]   Ibidem

come from women and well as men; it comes from people who have the patriarchal notions very deep routed. This is a shock against their values, patriarchal values, so it is evident that they react with fear against something that put in danger their values. It shows, even more, why we need this type of education, as inequalities and sexism are still very present and internalized in, at least, in part of the society.

The report focus significantly on ways to avoid polemic. Another example proposed is changing titles of books that could be polemic. It may be seen as if they were replying to the threats of the conservative groups that initiated the boycotts. Are they following their game? It is also the case with not mentioning 'gender equality', with avoiding making it seen as a feminist militant result. At the end of the report, the way they summarize their ideas it to call for "prudence" (as well as for "voluntarism" and "clarity")[214]. Therefore, we could argue that our analysis of how the French government would like to go unnoticed, and to avoid everything that can cause polemic is true, and it can be understandable. All this shows that is extraordinary how important the communication of a project is. One of the recommendations to avoid sounding " so radical" when saying "equality between boys and girls", because it can cause 'polemic', is to specify "equality of rights between boys and girls" or "equality in competences between boys and girls"[215], as if equality for 'everything' could not be achieved. The objective is to avoid polemic, but to what cost? Maybe it is indeed necessary to avoid it in this particular context, but it shows an evident problem when it is perceived that in a country like France making reference to equality between boys and girls may cause a problem.

On the other hand, the report points out interesting ways to improve the formation material, as including not only sociology references, but also anthropology, philosophy, law and, moreover, neuroscience. This is because neuroscience has proved that we have a cerebral plasticity, which means that our brain is transformed according to our experiences, which displaces myths regarding different capacities of learning between girls and boys[216], and whose mainstream explanation can be very useful for the

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[214] Ibidem, p.24
[215] Ibidem, p.25
[216] Ibidem, p.29

aim of the program.

To conclude, the implementation was overall good, even if some changes need to be done. The ones which I consider most relevant are a better communication of the program (which does not mean necessary to avoid talking about 'gender equality'), and a better way to make all teachers to be involved with the program, also reinforcing the communication with them about its relevance.

I would like to analyse now some of the contents of the program from a critical perspective, because even if I believe the program is very positive in general, I would like to point out what I consider its weaknesses are.

The program pays considerable attention to the work opportunities in the future, to encourage girls to follow as well what is considered in the market to be a good qualified job that will lead them to a good labour insertion and salary in the future. This is specifically seen in the goal 3 of the program, which with a naked eye can seems to be very positive, but is it in fact? We could argue that the main problem for gender inequality is the system we live in, which could be not the most efficient one for gender equality. Maybe the problem is that jobs are more or less valued depending on whether they are predominantly done by women or men and the reasons behind it; or the problem of the (lack) of sharing *responsibilities* at home, with children, or the particular pressure on 'motherhood, underlining at the same time its incompatibilities, according to the system, with having the same successful careers as men. To have a system that allows conciliating family life with work is essential. It is necessary to avoid reinforcing a classicist system where some women follow this kind of 'successful' jobs, while others, most probably women, take care of their house tasks and children individually. It is essential for women and men to be able to enjoy their family and private life. We have to ask ourselves which kind of 'equality' we want and if the gender equality we promote will be for *all*. I believe it is good to break stereotypes on purchasing science career and to open for both girls and boys more professional disciplines, not be gender biased when referring to careers opportunities, which is the goal of the program, as negative stereotypes are very common even in our days. For example, what is consider "feminine" jobs, such as kindergarten teachers, can lead men to be mocked if they

decide that option, in many countries, or traditionally "masculine" jobs, such as truck-driver, if done by a woman, she can be mocked as well. This is very simplified, but helps to see how gender stereotypes are still in place regarding specific careers patterns. However, why, then, I ask if that is the equality we want? What I make reference to, is the fact that we have to look how to achieve gender equality for everyone, not only for French medium or high social-economic classes. When implementing a gender equality program, it cannot be ignored that it should take into account the intersections of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, social class and other factors that influence equality. More important than encouraging women to follow the careers which are "better positioned", should be to work hard on the fact that family, children, house task, are not "women responsibility", to approach both sex the importance of being part of their children lives, if they decide to have them, which is also a choice; is to end with the so 'popular' sexist 'joke' that women place is the kitchen. The program in France should not forget to especially focus on those stereotypes, to analyse and de-construct them in order to create real equality. The system should also change in France to provide time for workers to better conciliate work and private /family time, for both sexes, as if not, no matter which career a woman may choose, if she decides to have a family it would be more likely that she has much more work to do or not enough time to engage in her paid work. In this case, we will be promising girls that engaging in STEM careers would be a solution, when the salary gap and the problem if inequality is much more complex than this. In my opinion, to achieve gender equality, we need to ensure that is possible to have a timetable to conciliate private life and work for everyone, following the model of Scandinavian countries.

Should we also be critical with what is considered as "successful" careers? One thing is to get rid of stereotypes regarding career paths, and another is to encourage children to follow *only* those careers which will be economically more profitable, as they can fall into an extremely market mentality, where the most underlined value is the rentability of the job, and not other factors which can also be very important for a person life. Moreover, maybe the "problem" is not that there are not enough women in STEM careers, but that men and women are not paid the same for the same job, or for an equal job yet. Furthermore, one could argue that even if women do not follow STEM

careers as much as men do, in our days, a greater number of women than men follow medicine (or health and welfare careers)[217] and law in Europe, United States, and the OECD countries in general[218], and these are disciplines that have a good earning future, but women receive less salaries in those field, at least in the United States[219] or the United Kingdom [220] according to the data we have. In the same line, 60% of graduates are women in Europe[221], but we still face general problems in equal salaries and top positions and boardrooms entrance for women[222]. For example, regarding board positions of companies in European countries women are still a big minority. In France the percentage of women is a little bit more than 20% (around 22%), compared to almost 80% of men. France introduced in 2011 a 40% quota for women on the boardrooms[223], as other countries in Europe, and they also have a strategy to fight against the gender gap salary[224], but I believe a change of mentality is also needed to see real modifications, and one of the main needs is to fight stereotypes on what the *role* is for each sex. Women still face problems "choosing" between a family and a career everyday, when this should not be on the table[225]. Cheris Kramarae and Dale Spendeer have explained that "girls were socialized into this model through strong identification with female patterns in the family and through patriarchal practice both at home and at school. Identification with this vision of passive femininity led many girls to choose educational path that did not conflict with a domestic role"[226]. They also underlined how mainstream economy does not take into consideration gender dynamics, or not enough[227]. Maybe we are trying to solve the problem of gender equality within a system that does not make this possible; maybe we need deeper transformations, which do not come from encouraging women into STEM careers, which seem to be the objective of the OECD[228] and many countries. In response to the Swedish focus on promoting STEM

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[217]   OECD, 2012, p.57
[218]   Ibidem
[219]   Cohen, 2012
[220]   Williams, 2013
[221]   European Commission (b), 2014
[222]   Holt, 2012
[223]   Picey, Flynn and Golovnina, 2011
[224]   European Commission (b), 2014
[225]   Ibidem
[226]   Kramarae and Spendeer, 2000, p.473
[227]   Ibidem, p.446
[228]   OECD, 2012

for girls (Sweden was one the pioneers countries in this regard), it has been said that "this emphasis shifts the issue of fairness and inequality to a matter of educational choice."[229] The problem could be that "its simplistic notion that individual learning and achievement depend on educational and job opportunities, (...), rather than on institutionalized arrangements of economic, social and political power"[230]. The education program in France is very positive, but its implementation should keep in mind that the primary focus should not be on promoting successful career paths for girls, at least not only, as that would be a simplistic vision on how to achieve better equality, the focus on breaking stereotypes more generally (and "at home") should come first, in my opinion.

Moreover, what could improve the program is, as mentioned, to include a cross section also regarding the influence of social class, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion or other topics that interfere with equality and non discrimination in the program, to be critic with different experience on gender identity according to all these factors. To be also critic with the stereotypes regarding those issues. France has included another education project since 2015 to reinforce the "values of the Republic", through defending secularism, civil and moral education and fighting against prejudices. This will promote 'social mix' at school and create an online platform with education resources to fight racism and anti-Semitism[231], and also provide resources on prevention and fight against 'radicalization' phenomena. Some other interesting goals and measures are an increased budget for children in poverty, the inclusion of philosophical debates workshops and critical thought in the media, or to include more research and formation to avoid discriminations[232]. This program, complemented with the one on gender equality, can be seen as complete in terms of fighting against different issues concerning inequalities and discriminations. Nonetheless, it could be interesting to take an inclusive perspective when addressing those problems, not just to see them separately. For example, when addressing issues concerning the media, it can be interesting not to focus only on stereotypes based on religion, or stereotypes based on ethnicity or stereotypes

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[229] Bank, 2007,p.766
[230] Ibidem, p.4
[231]   It can be noticed that there is not specific goal as well against Islamophobia, which could be considered as a particular problem in France.
[232]   Minister of National Education of France (b), 2015

based on gender, but to view all together through 'inclusive' glasses. Moreover, we could argue if this is positive or not, in terms of respecting different identities and pursuing non discrimination, to have 'strict' policies regarding secularism at school, as it is forbidden to show 'ostentatious' religious signs since 2004, which has also been seen as conflicting with freedom of religion, to express one identity and to accept pluralism. It can also be seen, moreover, as a measure that was adopted specifically against the veil of young Muslim women, because "discrete" signs are accepted[233] [234], such as a small crucifix. This has been very discussed, and it is a complex issue, but it should be kept in mind when addressing policies of non-discrimination[235], not radicalisation[236] or tolerance to diversity. Human Rights Watch, for example, has expressed a view that I share: "restrictions on wearing the veil in public life are as much a violation of the rights of women as is the forced wearing of the veil. Muslim women, like all women, should have the right to dress as they choose, and to make decisions about their lives and how to express their faith, identity and morals"[237].

In any case, we should not lose focus on the matter that occupies this paper. I believe that the inclusion of a perspective on different factors that influence different stereotypes and prejudices can be very beneficial in the general goal of gender equality and non-discrimination. If I could, I would, therefore, advocate for one integrated program that looks at these dynamics together, and not separately.

On the next section we will analyse who actually followed the protests and boycotts and how the mobilisation was done. We have already seen what where the reasons for the rejection of the program, but now we will analyse where the influences came from.

The spectrum of people that defended the boycott and parents that followed this is difficult to be "classified". We could argue that, an important percentage of parents who followed the program, were Catholic and Muslim, but we do not know the extent of this. It has been said that Farida Belghoul was able to convince certain Muslim

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[233] Jamet and Ceilles, 2014
[234] Human Rights Watch, 2010
[235] May, 2012
[236] Ramdani, 2014
[237] Human Rights Watch, 2010

families to follow the boycott[238], and Farida Belghoul, when she thought that "A, B, C, D for equality" was cancelled, posted "Vive la convergence Islamo-Catholique" ("long live" to the convergence Islamo-Catholique) [239] The French Council of the Muslim cult asked for explanations about the education program to the Education Minister[240]. In the same line, the Catholics integrationists, part of the organization or movement called Civitas, were also supporting the boycott[241]. The official page of Civitas had different articles calling for the stop of "A, B, C, D for equality " and encouraging the boycott, affirming its support to Farida Belghoul[242]. The official page of Civitas Youths had messages in favour of gender stereotypes, as these affirmed that they were rich and facilitated the lecture of the world, and that "if we destroy the stereotype of the vulnerability of women, we expose the women to a cultural diminishment of the judicial empathy in case of physic violence"[243]. In addition, Civitas groups were very strong on protesting against gay marriage, and they even created a new protest, against the "homofolie"[244], which would be a term that could be translated as "homocraziness". The hardest and important question is how much influence they had. In an article it is affirmed that, for the local elections, "the institute advances with a paradoxical discretion"[245], and the same article underline as well their effectiveness in social media and online platforms.

Nonetheless, it can be difficult to exactly reckon who did not sent their children to school and the reasons behind it, religious or not. An important fact to consider is that the phone messages sent to parents lied about what the program was about, which makes it more difficult to see how many people oppose the educational program as it really is, or how many people believe the fake rumours. Different media talk about 30%[246] or 40%[247] of effectiveness of the boycott depending on the schools. This is a very significant number, and not only a "minority". It is important to address that it was also

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238 France Inter, 2014
239 Missir, 2014
240 Le Monde, 2014
241 France Inter, 2014
242 Civitas, 2014
243 (My translation) France Jeunesse Civitas, 2014
244 Quéguiner, 2012
245 Ibidem
246 Le Matin, 2014
247 France Inter, 2014

a problem of communication of the government concerning what was the program about, as we have underlined, in addition to the manipulation of certain collectives and individuals that started spreading false rumours. However, how can we know if there was a real opposition to have a program aiming for gender equality, if a part of the population in France is actually "scared" of this idea, or if the opposition came from believing the false rumours? We could conclude that it was a mix of these options. The Minister of Education, at the time of the protest, asked different workers on education and teachers, to talk to the parents concerned about the program to explain them what the program was really about, to avoid the absence of students at school, in addition to a follow up with the parents in case they decide to follow the boycott, to show them the web site of the program and all the information available [248]. However, we can argue that this measure arrived too late, as a good communication had to be done from the beginning.

It is also important to keep in mind the direct connexion of the boycott at school and the group "la manif pour tous"- *the protest for all*-, the associations that organized the protest against "gay marriage"[249], because this group also underlines their defence of "the traditional family and values", which is why they declared that they were also against the "gender theory" education program. In fact, one of the main protests was organized on the 2 of February 2014, just some days after the boycott (on the 24 and 27 January 2014), and it was not a coincidence. Its aim was similar. The same collectives against gay marriage were the ones who opposed the education program and the organization "la manif pour tous" had organized protests against it[250]. It is not a coincidence, as there are all questions of gender: gender construction on how to perceive gender roles and stereotypes. There are certain stereotypes that are expected for men and women, which include, for example, being heterosexual, forming a "traditional" family, women will be expected to be "feminine", men will be expected to be "masculine" and so on. This does not mean that everyone follows those categories, people that do not *fit* in the most common stereotypical categories exist, and can be

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[248] Peillon, 2014

[249] The name of the group is due to the fact that the law for same sex marriage was called "le marriage pour tous"- *the marriage for all*-

[250] Kovac, 2014

discriminated because of that. That is the reason of the origin of discrimination or attacks against the LGTBIQ community, as they do not fit into the conservative stereotypical gender roles. For those people who aim to maintain the most traditional roles, both "gay marriage" and gender equality education constitutes a threat. It means to acknowledge that homosexual people, people from the LGTBIQ community, have the same rights as the heterosexual, or at least, the same right of marriage. This recognizes that family does not have to be the "traditional family" of man and woman; and this is precisely why, this group of people, claims in the demonstrations against same-sex marriage that they are defending the "family"- the "traditional family"-. It means to break stereotypes roles, which is something not "acceptable" for some people; this is a threat to break the patriarchy system of dominance and hierarchy roles. As it is evident, both women and men can defend this patriarchal system, as we have seen, since Farida Belghoul is one of those who supported the boycott mentioned *supra*.

The group "la manif pour tous" argue that they are apolitical[251] and non-confessional[252], but some important media have targeted them as being close to the extreme right and the Catholic Church in France, as even if not all of them are Catholic and this is a diverse group, the Catholic represents an important part of the group[253]. Nonetheless, this should not be misunderstood as seeing that the Catholic population in France opposes same-sex marriage, for example, as "more or less 40% of catholic that practice their religion were not hostile to the Taubira Law" (a law which includes the legality of same-sex marriage), according to an opinion poll in Pélerin in 2013[254], while 60% of the general population in France is in favour on the same-sex marriage, according to the Pélerin opinion poll[255]. It is interesting to know that 54% of Catholic agree on same-sex marriage, but if they practice their religion it goes down to 41% and if they do not practice it, it is 56%, while in "other religions" 47% agree with the measure and, finally, 76% people without religion agree[256]. This shows a very important fact: people without religion are the ones who agree most with this measure. It could be

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[251] La Manif pour Tous, (a)
[252] La Manif pour Tous, (b)
[253] Raison du Cleuziou, 2014
[254] Ibidem
[255] Le Pelerin
[256] Ibidem

argued that this is predictable, but why? Is it because the Catholic Church, as well as other religious institutions, have defended that the only relationship possible is between a man and a woman? As well as seeing homosexuality as a sin? Even if the Pope Francisco has been more "open" in his regard to homosexual people, the Vatican turned back fast this welcoming[257]. We will analyse in the next section with more detail the different views about gender and the vision of men and women *roles* that exist within Catholics and Muslims, to understand if there is an influence of religion into traditional values and sexist stereotypes of men and women, and to understand the variety on how religion can be interpreted.

Here we can see a table on the perceptions of the population in France regarding the same-sex marriage:

	Agree with same-sex marriage	Disagree with same-sex marriage
Total population	60,00%	40,00%
Total Catholics	54,00%	46,00%
Practising Catholics	41,00%	59,00%
Non practising Catholics	56,00%	44,00%
Other religions	47,00%	53,00%
Non religious	76,00%	24,00%

France opinion poll about same-sex marriage on 2013, Pèlerin source

In the study "Trajectoires et origines", realized by INED and INSEE, the main data bases in France, it is shown the different religions of migrants in France and from the whole population in 2008, which allows us to know the percentages of the different religion in France[258] [259]. The results are that Catholics represent 11,5 million of people, 43% of the population, Muslims are 2,1 million people, 8% of the population, and there

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[257] BBC News, 2014
[258] Beauchemin, Hamel and Simon, 2010,p. 124
[259] I show this study result not because they focus on migration, which is not the topic of this thesis, but because "the compilation of official statistics based on religious beliefs is not permitted by French law" (Cosgrove, 2011) which means that only surveys are permitted, and, even thought, there are not easy to find, therefore, we used the data of that study.

are 500.000 Protestants, 150.000 Buddhists and 125.000 Jews[260].

Here is the data table[261]:

	Total Population in France
Without religion	45,00%
Catholics	43,00%
Orthodoxes	0,50%
Protestants	2,00%
Muslims	8,00%
Jews	0,50%
Buddhists	0,50%
Others	0,50%

Religions in France, INED and l'INSEE source, 2008

However, other studies show other data considering the level of religiosity in France. In the Global Index of Religiosity and Atheism from 2012, it is established that in France 37% consider themselves religious, 34% non religious and 29% atheist, and the country is on the *top 10* of Atheist population[262]. We can affirm, therefore, that France is not a very "religious country" as such in comparison with other countries in the world, including European peers, as 51% of people in the EU believe there is a God, and in France this percentage decreases to 27%, being among the countries with less "believers" in God, according to an Euro barometer Poll from 2010[263]. It is, in any case, a general trend since 2005: "religiosity drops by 9%, while atheism rises by 3%"[264]. It is important to keep in mind that "for some people, religious affiliation is purely nominal or used as an identifier to distinguish themselves from members of other religious groups. By contrast, others have a serious personal commitment. Therefore, surveys often seek to capture both religious adherence (also called religious identity or religious affiliation) and degree of religious commitment, or 'religiosity'. Religiosity is bound to attitudes, behaviour and values, while religious affiliation is more similar to ethnicity,

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260   Beauchemin, Hamel and Simon, 2010,p.23
261   Ibidem, p.124
262   Shafi, Shahid and Zuettel, 2012, p.3
263   European Commission, 2010, pp.203-204
264   Shafi, Shahid and Zuettel, 2012, p.6

something that for most people is part of their family, community or cultural heritage, rather than being chosen by them"[265]. This explains why the results would be different if the question was about being part of a religion (which is more cultural and less personal), practising the religion (which is what could work the best to know the degree of religiosity of the individual[266]), and the question of believing (which is again more personal, but maybe does not reflect the degree of influence of the religion, as some people may believe but they do not follow the main religious institutions). It is why the results are so different from number of religious people in France.

We could be surprised that in France, which is a secular, "laïque", state, and not a religious or a-confessional state, like the majority of countries in Europe, and where the percentage of religious people is much lower than in other countries in Europe, the protest against same-sex marriage and gender equality education has been so strong and has had significant power. This could show that the correlation between level of religiosity in a country and the opposition to challenges in the gender system, such as same-sex marriage, or fight against stereotypes of gender in schools, are actually not so correlated as we may think. In Spain and Portugal, countries with a higher percentage of religious people[267], it has been a protest against same-sex marriage, but not with the same intensity as in France. Why France? It is very difficult to find explanations, but it can be affirmed that France may be more conservative that the world may expect it to be, or that there are small conservative groups, able to exert a strong power or have a good political mobilization. It has been shown that conservative group is also involved in the prohibition of religion symbols at school, even if is based in "laïcité", this shows that they want to maintain a French "status quo", and even more, we have seen the raise of extreme right political parties such as Front National, with a result of 25,4% in the last Europeans elections from 2014[268] However, this is not an isolated fact of France. In different countries of Europe we have seen the raise of very extreme right political parties[269].

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[265] McAndrew and Voas, 2011,p.2
[266] As we have seen, practising Catholics and non-practising Catholics reply in different ways to the question of same-sex marriage.
[267] European Commission, 2010
[268] RTL (b)
[269] Ibidem

Coming back to the collective "la manif pour tous", it is not very coherent the fact that they consider themselves "apolitical". They are political, they are doing politics when they oppose the possibility of people from the same sex to marry, to have the same rights without discrimination based on sexual orientation, and they are doing politics when they oppose a program of education that wants to increase equality between boys and girls. It is clear that "la manif pour tous" has a conservative political view, this maybe justified because of "religious beliefs" or just because of the preservation of the *status quo* or traditional -discriminatory- beliefs.

Even if we have shown that a "more religious" country not always means a more conservative country, there is still a correlation between religious people and conservative opinions, such as the fact that there are more religious people being against the same-sex marriage than non-religious, at least in France. The protest against same-sex marriage and the gender-equality education program in France cannot be reduced to a religious matter. It would be a simplistic analysis. However, we can affirm that some of the forces against these type of measures have a direct connexion with religion: either because religious associations are against them, or because a certain percentage of those following the protest, such as the boycott of non sending children to schools against the education program, are religious and have "religious" reasons to protest against it.

The question is not if religion is the main factor that has an influence on these conservative views of society, but what would happen if religion was out of the picture? Can we imagine what would be the answer to these changes, how the gender norms would have been in France without the religious influence? It is hard to imagine this issues without taking into consideration the historical role of religion in influencing values and society. I think that religion could take a place in this, even if not alone. This is why I want to include a short analysis of the religion influence in gender perspectives.

7. The influence of Religion in Gender Issues

Religion is an institution that influences people's lives, behaviour and socialization; it influences societies. Nonetheless, religion is not excluded from the society in which it interacts, in fact, we have to take into consideration that is also the

other way around: religion institutions have been influenced by society. In fact, "by way of symbolic and material practices religion can reinforce existing gendered distributions of power or try to change them"[270]. In this mutual influence of *dominant* culture from one side, and religions from the other, it is important to underline that "a theoretical account of the relations between religion and gender requires an acknowledgement that both serve to represent, embody and distribute power within society"[271].

The way of the interpretation and 'usage' of a religion depends on the specific society and on the different individuals inside that religion. There is not only one way to interpret any religion. There are, however, voices that can be more powerful or influential, and voices that try to make new points, such as feminist voices inside religions.

If we strictly analyse the sacred books, we will find, as we will see, references of sexism and patriarchy, in both Christianity and Islam. Nonetheless, those books where created in a very different time and context, as Dustin points out: "by ignoring the context within which Islamic texts emerged as well as the existence of alternative texts, secular fundamentalists are as guilty as Muslim traditionalists of 'essentializing and perpetuating difference, reproducing a crude version of the Orientalist narrative of Islam."[272].

Therefore, we can establish, as a basis, that there is not a uniform interpretation of any religion, but there can be different ones. However, even if we could conclude that, after all, because of how Islam and Christianity are built and reproduce in society, these are mainly patriarchal and sexist, there are still women and men who want to create more gender equality perspectives inside of those religions, as there are women and men which want to create more equality in other institutions. There are religious people who do not conform to inequality. The same applies to certain religious interpretations, sometimes majority interpretations, that the LGTBQI community is not well-received or accepted in Islam or Christianity. However: "should people have to choose between their sexual and gender identities on the one hand, and their religious,

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[270]   Woodhead, 2013,p.61
[271]   Ibidem, p.60
[272]   Dustin, 2012, p.39

racial, and cultural identities on the other?"[273] A catholic feminist says: "The Catholic church so overtly and fully excludes women from certain jobs and seeks to deny them certain rights that some dismiss the idea that a true feminist can profess the Catholic faith. Yet this is precisely why the Catholic Church needs feminists."[274] And she adds: "Why should I abandon my expression of faith to the all-male hierarchy? Why not stay and advocate for a more inclusive church, better theology, and teachings more reflective of the lived experience of women?"[275].

What this perspective could show is that the main application of religion can be done in a certain way, but is important that there are women and men who fight from inside to make religion closer to gender equality and real acceptance of everyone. However, this does not mean that we can argue that the influence of the main interpretations and main institutions of Catholicism and Islam can support traditional gender based role, and can support a patriarchal system.

Some authors consider that is not compatible for a person who believes in gender equality to be part of a main religion, or to try to change it. A 'provocative' article said that women in monotheistic religions who consider themselves feminist are, in reality, under the "Stockholm syndrome"[276], because they stay in oppressed religions, as Joumana Haddad has said; "Not only are the monotheist religions biased against women, but they are, all three of them, racist, sexist, homophobic, merciless, bloody, and biased against humanity, freedom and human rights. They are even biased against common sense."[277] However, her article received different replies from religious feminist, such as this interesting one; "the point is that religions change – always have and always will. Tell me of another human-constructed institution (education, law, state, family, even the military) that feminists have determined to be permanently incompatible with equality and justice?"[278] If we start by the basis that the societies we live in are sexist, in different degrees, and that patriarchy has been the norm for centuries, feminist and human rights advocates should try to go to live in another planet

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[273] Hernann, 2015
[274]   Keneally, 2015
[275]   Ibidem
[276]   Haddad, 2012
[277]   Ibidem
[278] Riswold, 2013

instead of changing and improving this one. In addition, even if it can be conflictive sometimes, it is important not to forget the fact that religion represents an important part of many people lives, identity and culture.

If we go into the sacred text of Islam and Christianity, we can found in both sexist elements, however, we have to remember the time they were created. Nonetheless, if religious practician interpreted them in strict sense, it could be a problem.

We can analyse differences from the sacred texts of the Judaeo-Christian tradition and the Islam. They began with the descriptions on the creation of the world. In Judaeo-Christian tradition, the Genesis points out that, after Eva had eaten the forbidden fruit, and "tented" Adam to do so, God said to Eva: "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you."(Genesis, 3:16)[279]. It has been affirmed that "The Qur'an, contrary to the Bible, places equal blame on both Adam and Eve for their mistake. Nowhere in the Qur'an can one find even the slightest hint that Eve tempted Adam to eat from the tree or even that she had eaten before him".[280] This could have influenced differently both books, but in reality, we find sexist affirmations in both (even if we have to keep in mind that there are several translations from the original texts). There is a very specific quote to mention, the 4:34 of the Koran (Sahih International translation), which says: "Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth. So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard. But those [wives] from whom you fear arrogance - [first] advise them; [then if they persist], forsake them in bed; and [finally], strike them. But if they obey you [once more], seek no means against them. Indeed, Allah is ever Exalted and Grand."[281]. This part of the Koran is translated in many ways, but the message remains the same, and it is an apology to gender based violence, it literally says how men are in charge and women subordinated, and how men can "punish" women with violence. A further analysis is shown: "There is a sharp divide between

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[279] Abdel Azeem, p.5
[280] Ibidem, p.6
[281] http://corpus.koran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=4&verse=34

traditional interpretations of this verse, which stress female obedience and male authority, and contemporary interpretations, which emphasize the financial component of men's marital duties and the limits on a husband's power over his wife. Many Muslims have gravitated toward the latter views, as they are more in keeping not only with modern sensibilities in general but also the Qur'anic portrayal of women in other verses as full human beings and partners in the relationship of marriage. Yet, however convincing one finds the progressive arguments that a man's striking his wife is not permitted by Q. 4:34, it is impossible to remove all difference or hierarchy from this verse without doing violence to the Qur'anic text itself "[282]

There are more quotes in the Koran affirming the supremacy of men, like this one: "Allaah commands you as regards your children's (inheritance): to the male, a portion equal to that of two females" [al-Nisa' 4:11]. Other quotes, however, emphasize a more equal relationship; "The believing men and believing women are allies of one another." 9:71(Sahih International)[283]

The Koran creates a patriarchal system, where men are in charge of maintaining women, they have the economic power and women are subordinated. In the Koran you can also find messages of peace, and mutual respect, but when it comes to gender roles, they are very fixed and patriarchal. After all, when was it created? It also blames homosexuality: "Do you indeed approach men with desire instead of women? Rather, you are a people behaving ignorantly" 27:55[284]. However, at the same time, it has quotes like the following one, which aim the respect of all people: "you who have believed, let not a people ridicule [another] people; perhaps they may be better than them; nor let women ridicule [other] women; perhaps they may be better than them. And do not insult one another and do not call each other by [offensive] nicknames. Wretched is the name of disobedience after [one's] faith. And whoever does not repent - then it is those who are the wrongdoers." (49:11)[285]. The quotes that we have seen do not have to affirm necessarily religious people have to be patriarchal or sexist, as there can be other interpretations, and there are religious followers who do not believe in this inequality.

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[282]   Ali, 2003
[283]   Qur'an
[284]   Qur'an
[285]   Ibidem

The same can be applied to Christianity, as also the sacred texts contain sexist references.

In Christianity, we can find in the Ecclesiasticus book the following sentence: "The birth of a daughter is a loss" (Ecclesiasticus 22:3). The Ecclesiasticus is, however, not part of the Biblical canons for Protestant, but it is for Catholics and Orthodox[286].

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, in the chapter 11, states: "Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God… For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man…In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God" (New International Version, 1 Corinthians 11:1-3; 8-9; 11-12)[287].

In the first book of Timothy, chapter 2, the sin of Eve comes again; "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety"(New International Version, 1 Timothy 2:11-15)."[288]

Other patriarchal quotes can be seen in Corinthians 14:34-35; "The women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church"[289]. Or in Titus 2:3-5; "Older women likewise are to be reverent in behaviour, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled." [290]

From other perspective, when it comes to the eyes of their devotion for Christ, they will all be the *same*; quote of Galatians 3:26-29; "For in Christ Jesus you are all

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[286]   Elwell, 1997
[287]   Lal, 2011, p. 3
[288]   Lal, 2011, p. 3
[289]   Open Bible
[290]   Ibidem

sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus"[291]

We can find the same parallelism with Islam, when it concerns women and men faith to Good; "The believing men and believing women are allies of one another" (9:71)

In Christianity, it is learnt that "the essence of God's law, according to Jesus, is love without limits. God is calling His people to love as he loves: perfectly and without limitation."[292] Nonetheless, what is the relation of this message with others that blame homosexual people for their "behaviour"? As it has been the official message from the Catholic Church for many years.

Linda Woodhead has underlined that "Everything in the Catholic Church after Jesus' death and resurrection represents human attempts to interpret and apply the teachings of Christ to our circumstances. Because men fairly exclusively ran the world until very recently, it has been fairly exclusively men in the Catholic Church who've done the interpreting and applying. Not overly surprising, then, that the result is a set of teachings and rules that exclude and oppress women."[293]

After reading many of these statements of the sacred books, and others beyond the ones here collected, one tends to be sceptical on how religion can be reconcilable with gender equality. How people who are raised, and who believe in their religion cannot be patriarchal or consider that women are inferior? (Even if indeed there are many examples of people who do not have this vision, Christians and Muslims). Nonetheless, religious people study the sacred texts and the history of their religion, as well as non-religious people in countries where religion is mandatory at school level. It can be underlined, however, that because the time has changed, the study of the sacred texts could be adapted, instead of being literal: "Some sacred texts form the cornerstone of a religion, instilling law, character and spirituality in its people; some are narratives of historical figures in the faith. A text might be viewed as the unchanging "Word of God;" other texts are revised and expanded by later generations. Texts can be literal, or

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[291] Ibidem
[292] Woodhead, 2004, p.11
[293]   Keneally, 2015

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metaphorical, or both"[294].

However, different interpretation of a religion, how far can they be the from its sacred books quotes? And how independent a faith can be from its holy/sacred books? Sacred books are read in Churches and Mosques. This does not intend to mean that, as saying before, these religions are incompatible with gender equality, but it is true that there are numerous challenges and questions to be solved. Indeed, religions can be used as a tool for patriarchal and sexism support, and can be interpreted and supported in this way. This could be what happened in some sectors in France, where they interpreted religion in this perspective, as it is clearly the case for the organization mentioned, Civitas, or for some of the parents who protested because of religious reasons. Nonetheless, we also have to analyse what is the general influence of religion in the mentality and values of a country. When we regard that France has, as a value, "laïcité", or secularism, and that the percentage of religious people is pretty low, it is hard to affirm how strong could the influence of religion be in the general perspective. However, we could also try to analyse if the influence from religion institutions took place during the history of the country. The values of a country evolve, but they are also connected with its past, and maybe we can underline that Catholicism did had an influence in French values, even if, as time passes, the State became secular. On the other hand, it could also be possible that there are only some small, but strong, groups with conservative views based on religion, which have been the ones supporting these questions and opposing changes, and which had quite an influence on the mobilisation of more people.

Some authors had pointed out that "The nature of religions as organizational structures, which tend to be hierarchically structured and conservative rule-based institutions, is a more plausible explanation for their inculcation of gender inequitable norms (…) Elite groups tend to capture power in institutions, and thus, patriarchal dominance in the economic sphere is likely to be replicated in religious organizations."[295] Inglehart also underlines how "Religious organizations, particularly the Catholic Church and the evangelical movement among fundamentalist Christians in the West, and Islamic fundamentalist leaders in Muslim nations, have often actively

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[294]   Finding Dulcinea
[295]   Seguino and Lovinsky, 2009, p.5

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sought to reinforce social norms of a separate and subordinate role for women as home makers and mothers, buttressing traditional policies and the legal framework regulating marriage and divorce, abortion and contraception, family and childcare policy."[296]

There are different studies regarding the relationship between religion and gender trends. A very important one is the study "Gender Equality and Cultural Change around the World" by the notable politologues Inglehart and Norris. It expresses that economic development influences modernization of society, -which goes from agrarian, to industrialized and, finally, to post-industrial-, and these changes have a direct influence on the system of values. These authors talk about " (1) a transition from traditional to secular-rational values, and (2) a transition from survival to self-expression values"[297]. Gender equality will be more present and protected in a post-industrial culture, which has "self-expression values". This does not mean that gender equality is totally implemented in that phase, but that it is more present on the debate. At the same time, the study also reflects the correlation between the economic development and the increased secularization of a country/ society[298], which is also correlated with the gender-equality level. The hypothesis is that a more economically developed country will be a more secular country, and a more secular country will have more gender equality standards and values. After all, they underline that "the literature suggests multiple reasons why religion can be expected to exert a major influence over prevalent attitudes and practices regarding sex roles"[299].

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[296] Inglehart and Norris, 2003,p.50
[297] Inglehart and Norris, 2003,p.11
[298] Ibidem, p.55-56
[299] Ibidem, p.49

The following table[300] illustrates the study of Inglehart and Norris, where the higher punctuation is, the higher gender equality.

TABLE 3.4. *Mean scores on the Gender Equality Scale by denomination, religiosity, and type of society*

	Agrarian	Industrial	Postindustrial	Total
Denomination				
No denomination	67	69	80	72
Catholic	69	70	81	71
Protestant	64	66	81	71
Jewish	72	64	85	67
Orthodox	64	62	77	63
Hindu	62	74	70	63
Buddhist	70	60	61	61
Muslim	57	59	76	57
Religiosity				
Weak	63	67	81	70
Moderate	63	68	79	68
Strong	61	67	77	65
All	60	68	81	67

Note: For the coding, see Appendix B. For the 100-point Gender Equality Scale, see Table 2.1.
The 100-point Strength of Religiosity Scale in Table 3.1 is recoded to produce the categories.
Source: Pooled WVS/EVS, 1995–2001.

Nonetheless, the study points out that there are various exceptions to it, this is the case for the United States, that has a strong economy, but religion is still very present and, however, gender equality standards are in the same line as other post-industrial countries. It is also the case for Arabia Saudi, Qatar and other countries, where the economy has grown but a secularization process and a change in values have not accompanied this[301].

A critical perspective of this analysis is the fact that Inglehart and Norris take into consideration factors such as public opinion on divorce, homosexuality, abortion and prostitution (even if admitting that this last one is a topic that divides feminists) to study the attitude of societies towards gender, and the relationship between religion and those attitudes[302]. They are important factors, and the study shows correlation between more religion societies and less acceptance of those issues, which is interesting to take into consideration. Nonetheless, those topics cannot reflect the wide spectrum of aspects of gender equality and inclusion of the LGTBIQ community.

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[300]   Ibidem, p.66
[301]   Inglehart and Norris, 2003, p.55
[302]   Inglehart and Norris, 2003,p.60-62

The study "The Impact of Religiosity on Gender Attitudes and Outcomes", following the research of Inglehart and Norris, tries to demonstrate the following question: "Is there evidence that gender inequality in real measures of well-being is more pronounced in countries exhibiting a greater degree of religiosity?" through the example of Chile, India, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Poland, Serbia and United States, analysing the religions Buddhist, Catholic, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Orthodox, Protestant, and "other minorities". They also take into consideration that other factors have shown to influence the level of gender equality positions, such as the level of education and household income, which reflect that the higher they are, the more equality is shown, and also the correlation with age and different generations[303].

In the countries that have been analysed, we can determine that in the majority of them, more men than women consider that it is essential for women to have kids, and more men than women consider that if there are not enough jobs, the job should be for the men[304]. However, in general, the differences are not very big between the opinion of men and women in the same country, but vary more from one country to another. The study shows that in more religious countries, there are more conservative views respecting women and men, who tend to be sexist. Nonetheless, there are different exceptions, there are more religious people and people who practice often their religion in the United States than in Chile, but, however, people in Chile has stronger stereotypes about women and men, and more sexist views, than in the United States. It is also important to underline what the authors says: "In this study, no one religion stands out as consistently more gender inequitable in its effects than all the others"[305]. However, some authors, such as Inglehart and Norris, have another point of view and argue that "in particular, an Islamic religious heritage is one of the most powerful barriers to the rising tide of gender equality"[306] [307], which is a contested question, as we have seen in the introduction of this section.

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[303] Ibidem, pp.17-18

[304] Ibidem, p.54

[305] Ibidem, p.41

[306] Ibidem, p.49

[307] The study of Inglehart takes into account the main religion of a country, not the minorities inside, and, in any case, this will show that the majority of people who practice a religion in those countries have certain views and perspectives on gender, but we have seen that this main perspective can be contested and religion can be applied in different ways.

We can see the table concerning some of the reflected answers on gender attitudes[308]:

Figure 7. Gender Differences in Attitudes Towards Religion and Gender Equality
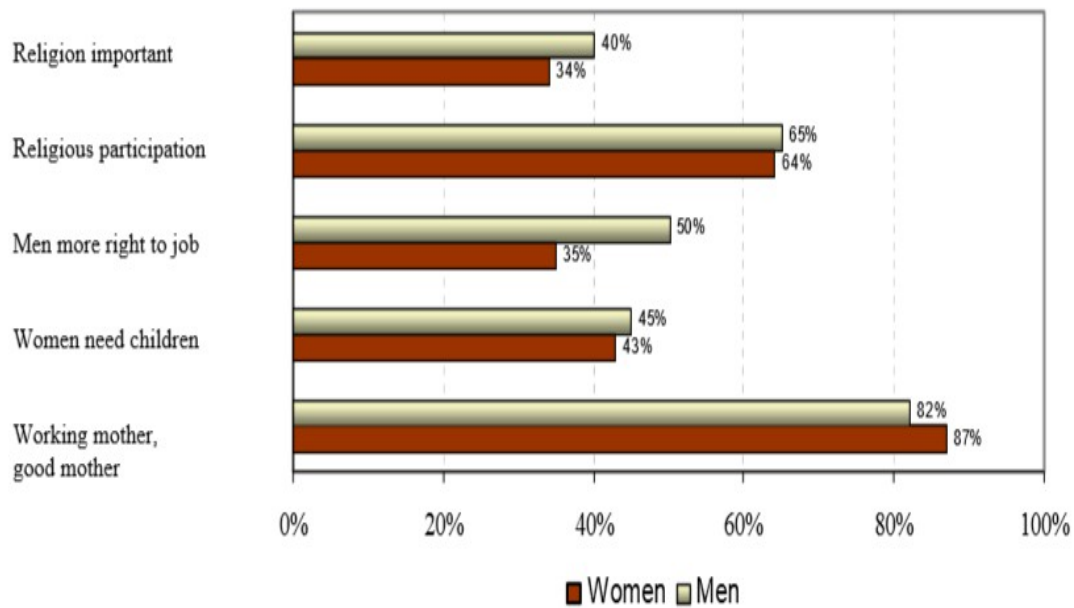
This study can be related to the topic of this thesis as it shows some correlation between the religiosity of people and their understanding of gender relations. However, the same study analyses that other factors shape these views, such as age, education and incomes.

At the same time, this study is limited to 9 countries, from which only 2 in Europe, one of them is Poland, one of the most Catholic countries in Europe, and the other one Serbia, which is Orthodox, both very different from the political structure of France. We cannot predict if France will be an exception of this correlation, as even if its level of religiosity is not very high, there have been demonstrations of conservative vision of gender and stereotypes. Nonetheless, these conservative demonstration cannot determine how the majority of the population will had replied to questions such as " If a women earns more money than her husband, it's almost certain to cause problems", "Can homosexuality be justified always, never be justified, or something in between?"

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[308] Seguino and Lovinsky, 2009,p.65

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or "If a women wants to have a child as a single parent but she doesn't want to have a stable relationship with a man, do you approve or disapprove?"[309]. We have the answer to the question of acceptance of homosexuality in France, a study has shown that "A majority of people now agree with the idea that homosexuality is a "sexuality like any other", but women (60%) agree more often than men (49%), and the younger generations more often than the older ones (66% in the 18-24 age group versus 36% in the 60-69 age group). In practice, however, homosexuality is less well-accepted than that: even among young people (ages 25-34), 59% of men and 41% of women say it would be a problem for them if "one of my children told me that he or she was homosexual".[310]. In the general study of "The Impact of Religiosity on Gender Attitudes and Outcomes", the question of "Can homosexuality be justified always, never be justified, or something in between?" has on a scale of 1-10, being 1 never justified, and 10 always justified, a result of 7,76.

Even if the general pattern establishes that more religious countries hold more conservative views, people in France, with only 37% of them considering themselves religious in 2012, as seen *supra*, could be less progressive in terms of gender issues, than other countries more religious in Europe, such as Spain. For example, Spain has been determined to be the country which is most accepting of homosexuality in 2013 (with 88% of people thinking homosexuality should be accepted in society, versus 77% of people in France)[311], but its level of religiosity is higher that the one of France (France had 37% of people considering themselves religious in 2012 and Spain had 52%)[312]. Nonetheless, what is more interesting is that in France, from 2007 to 2013, the percentage of people accepting homosexuality decreased 6 points, while in the countries around France the level increased[313]. France occupies the place 45 in the general rank of gender gap index of 2013, while Spain is in the 30 place, but many other countries in Europe are also in a higher position on the list, such as, for example, Scandinavian countries, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, UK, Slovenia or Lithuania[314], and many of

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[309] Ibiem, p.69
[310] Hamel and Rault, 2014,p.3
[311]   Khazan, 2013
[312]   Shafi, Shahid and Zuettel 2012, p.12
[313] Ibidem
[314] Sedghi, 2013

these countries have more religious people than France do (in this case, the fact that the countries with higher level of gender equality are Protestant may be a topic to analyse in another study).

To conclude, some interpretations of religion could influence patterns of more conservative values, but they are not the only cause, and France may not be much more progressive in terms of values than other countries in Europe that are more religious ones. Therefore, conservative views concerning gender cannot be limited to be a "religious question", and the role that religion played in the protests in France was probably influencing, but indeed not the only determinant factor.

8. Conclusions

We have seen how gender stereotypes establish different roles to boys and girls, men and women. Through the process of gender socialization, in which we are also participant, -and not just passive agents-, we learn what girls can do or not and what boys can do or not. Some times, these limitations would be more strict, some others less, but they remain limitations. If we were able to fight against sexist stereotypes we would help to create a more free world. When people learn that they are not limited in their behaviour based on their gender, they become freer, they can develop their personalities without a "gender restriction". It is a matter of freedom not to impose stereotypical roles for girls and boys.

However, we have seen that gender roles are dictated everywhere, and our process of socialization is influenced by many factors, from which school and the educational system are only one part. Nonetheless, this thesis focuses on how an education program for gender equality, which aims to fight against sexist stereotypes and create critical minds, could work. We have seen that international organizations, such as the European Union, United Nations, Council of Europe or the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development recommend to have education programmes for gender equality and to fight against stereotypes. In addition, we have addressed from a multidisciplinary perspective how gender stereotypes work and why their influence can be negative. We have seen how gender roles are based on a hierarchy, an unbalanced power between women and men, which perpetrates inequality.

The education program referred has three main objectives: to acquire and transmit a culture of gender equality; to reinforce the education of mutual respect and equality between girls and boys, women and men, and to engage on a more mixed educational and formational system in all levels of education. The main ideas behind this are to encourage critical thinking, to make students think about issues concerning gender, to be critic about discrimination based on gender and to teach at school from a gender equality perspective, taking into account women in history, for example. For this goal, we have learnt that it is essential that teachers believe in the idea behind the program, in having gender equality and in not transmitting sexist gender roles. It is important for teachers to receive an appropriate formation and clear pedagogic tools to implement the program, and when the person concerned does not believe in it, it would be a challenge to see effective results. Nonetheless, the report on the implementation of the program indicated that the majority of teachers are positive about this change.

The aforementioned pilot education program was implemented within an atmosphere of protests, boycott and some scepticism. Conservative groups mobilized protest against this pilot program. We have seen how the platform of organisations created to oppose the same sex marriage was also organising protests against the education program, as both things reply to a question of having different values and a conservative view of society. We have seen, as well, that religious groups were part of the organisers of protests and boycott against this pilot program, and that some parents mentioned religion as the cause to oppose the program. We have concluded that France is not a very religious country compared to the European average, however, there are still conservative people whose ideas are based on religion- or on their religion interpretation at least-, as well as conservative people independently from their religiosity. We have seen that, even if France is one of the least religious countries in Europe, the level of progressive values concerning gender is not higher than in many other European countries, as some studies could have suggested -because there is a general correlation between the religiosity of a country and its conservative values-. We have seen how a better communication of the program was needed to counter-back the false rumours spread by the group of opposing to the program, and to give reasons of the importance on such type of program.

Changes in education, especially in values related to change, are not always easy to implement. Gender equality has been an important principle in France for a long time, including for the education system. However, before this program was created, it was just a general principle, but which needed concrete measures. We have shown how France still has problems concerning gender equality and discrimination against women, as well as the rest of countries in Europe (and in the world). School can help to promote the value of gender equality and the importance of de-constructing stereotypes that limit the freedom of boys and girls. The need for this has to be better communicated.

Nonetheless, not everyone can be convinced of this. We have to acknowledge that there are many people with conservative values which do not desire any change, not in ending sexist stereotypes, not in ending the idea that only heterosexuality is accepted, and probably many other things that try to prevail within a patriarchal system. However, at the same time, the system of values is always changing, and it is difficult for those groups who want to maintain conservative schemes, as, to a certain extent, predominant ideas in society are transformed as the time passes.

However, they do not change and evolve so fast and in the degree that some of us would like to, as in terms of Human Rights values, non-discrimination, gender equality or social justice. It could be that still conservative ideas are very present in Europe, and it may not be so easy to break with the patriarchal structures that support gender inequality. It is not a won "battle" yet, either for those who want to preserve old traditional schemes of society or in France. I believe initiatives such as this education program are very positive for the general goal of gender equality.

We have seen that in other countries, such as Spain, Italy, Argentina or Canada, there has been also conservative groups who wanted to stop the changes on education programs, changes that could put in risk their conservative values, and in some cases these groups have succeeded, because of a change in government, or because of strong support from an institution with strong influence on the country, such as the Catholic Church. This shows how it is not an isolated case that of France, even if in many other countries changes in the education program to include a gender equality perspective did not activated that kind of rejection. The conclusion that we can take from this is that, changes would not be always easy, and these need a good communication strategy, as

even if a majority of the people could be in favour of progressive changes, other conservative groups could oppose them and convince other people, create misunderstandings and make the situation of change more difficult. It is part of the democratic game, some group will oppose new measures, for one reason or another, their mobilization is part of their democratic right of expression, even when they are creating false rumours about the project (to some extent). However, this does not mean that, in order to follow the implementation of a measure, which is backed by Human Rights and the International Community, such as this one, a bigger effort to avoid polemic, through good communication at national level and at school level be necessary. It is important to understand the reasons of opposition, where they come from and if there are ways we can challenge them.

This program is a very positive one, and it would be even better if it could integrate other discrimination issues. In addition, as I mentioned, it is important that the main goal remains fighting against sexist stereotypes, and not "encouraging" the choice of STEM careers for girls. Finally, I believe the changes that we could see from this type of program may be slow, but all attempt to pursue gender equality, and which is well formulated, should be celebrated.

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