

FAIR LANGUAGE

- A Project for Gender Equality -

We are an internationally recognized research team working in *psychology and gender*, and we are currently based at the University of Fribourg, in Switzerland. In the past decade, we have been increasingly concerned by the fact that women and men are still not equally treated across the globe, most often to the disadvantage of women. At the dusk of the 21st century, it seems rather peculiar that, on many fronts in society, women are still disadvantaged, in some cases to the extent that the situation resembles that of thirty years ago.

There are many reasons for such inequalities, and we have tried to investigate and understand some of them, always in pursue of a more progressive society. For example, through different scientific projects (funded by both Swiss and European institutions), our team has managed to raise public awareness on some of the discriminatory mechanisms associated to language use. We have mainly shown that *grammatical gender* (having a masculine and a feminine form in language), present in most languages in a form or another, actively contributes in people thinking that women are stereotypically bound to particular roles in society.

Given the media interest that this work has triggered, we think that we have now understood how to get public's attention, yet we need to go beyond this to find ways to actually change society. In other words, our future goal is not only to pursue our work on language use, but also to create and evaluate concrete interventions directly aimed at reducing inequalities between women and men.

As we explain in the *Foundation* section of the detailed description of the project (that you can request from pascal.gygax@unifr.ch), we believe that these interventions should be based around the idea that at the moment, girls and boys (and women and men), do not really have free will over their life choices. From birth till adult life, women and men are assigned (through education, through cinema, through songs, through social media,...) to specific sex roles, which generate unbalanced life opportunities. For example, girls are still often explicitly or implicitly pushed away from mathematics at school, obviously limiting their career choices, or are often portrayed as passive in popular culture – or in school books –, compared to their more active male counterparts. Although well documented, these issues have received very little attention in terms of intervention, yet their implications can be dramatic.

Changing current societal balance between women and men (or imbalance), through any intervention, is complex, though. As simple as the issues associated to such an imbalance may sound, they are incredibly difficult to deal with, inasmuch as

there are many factors contributing to gender inequalities. In fact, we would not come to you to ask for your support, were these issues easy to tackle. We would probably go back to sporadic support from Swiss and European institutions. But we now feel that, as worthwhile as our work has been so far (as well as the work of others), eradicating inequalities between women and men needs much more than what we have given. Put bluntly, we need more adequate resources to give it a real shot.

To do so, we propose to consolidate our team by having all four members (myself and three researchers) fully and exclusively committed to this project. As explained in details in the *Objectives and target changes of the project* section of the detailed description of the project, the team will pursue three main objectives:

1. Raise public awareness of the complex mechanisms that perpetuate gender inequalities
2. Find ways to change people's attitudes that interfere with gender equality.
3. Promote counter-stereotypical activities and behaviours to directly increase choice opportunities.

We believe that the benefits from supporting us are threefold. First, you have a chance to participate as our main partner in a great endeavour to tackle a historically long discriminatory process. Second, and related to the fact that our team will put great emphasis on public understanding of science, you will associate your name with a team that will be visible to the public eye. We have already consolidated a fruitful collaboration with national media, as illustrated by our regular appearances on the national radio programme (see www.fairlanguage.org/medias for some of the most important media coverage we had in the past few years). Third and finally, associating your name to our project will definitely consolidate your image as a personality eager to tackle major societal issues. In addition to this, it will demonstrate that public figures, as famous as they are, can also take part in scientific endeavours that directly tackle serious discriminatory processes.

In the detailed description of the project (on request), and in a more academic style, we detail our grounding values, the core issues associated to our project, and the team members.

By the present short presentation, we hope to raise some interest from your part, and look forward to discussing it with you.

If you wish to know more about the project, please do not hesitate to contact Pascal Gyga at pascal.gygax@unifr.ch. He will send you the detailed description of the project, the budget covering the requested funding, and the team's Curriculum Vitae.