GENDER NEUTRAL UPBRINGING

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Abstract

Our report tries to understand the meaning of gender-neutral parenting and education. Looking into more detail at the way it is practiced and in addition we will try to see how it effects the life of the children.

Our goal is to reach a better understanding of the concept of gender and the various elements of interaction between the parents, for instance their lifestyle and their decisions with respect to the children’s access to society and the choice of friend.

With the help of interpretative and psychoanalytical theories we hope to reach a better understanding of the various aspects of gender-neutral parenting and education.

In addition to our two chapters, done mostly by analyzing articles and books, we conducted two interviews to analyze in deeper detail what true family life is like and what the child can become.

In our project we made use of two methods: interview and qualitative data.

In the conclusion we wanted to emphasize the multitude of possibilities that may arise from the huge variety of various similarities and social behaviors as well as relations with which each individual must constantly confront. Furthermore, we either agreed or disagreed on the assertion made by experts, previously analyzed in our two main chapters.
Problem Formulation

How the parents, in family life, apply to the children gender neutral education?

Research Questions

• What is gender? It is biologically or socially formed?
• Mind
• Free will
• What Gender Neutral Parenting is? Who first used this term?
• Gender Neutral Parenting and education
• Family life
• How you do Gender Neutral Parenting or Education?
• How the children will develop?

Study cases

• Gender Neutral Parenting in the family of Charlotte Albret
• Gender Neutral Parenting and its results and developments in the family of Kira Kinch
INTRODUCTION

Objective

We concentrated our project mostly on the materials collected from various books and articles. After having analyzed them, we introduced in detail the meaning of gender neutral parenting and the different motivations that lead families into this new way of education. Afterwards, we considered if the families who apply gender neutral parenting or allow the children to be educated this way, are truly aware that they are applying this method and what it really holds. Therefore, we used the example of the kindergarten in Sweden to collect some information that was analyzed further in the project.

Our goal on one hand was to reach a better understanding of the meaning of gender neutral parenting and on the other hand was to create curiosity and desire in the reader to have a closer look at this new type of education because is a current social case.

Methods

The third chapter is dedicated to our two cases. In this chapter the main method used in the first interview. Thanks to our progression course on method for Subjectivity & Learning which focused on interviews, helped us on the one hand to better understand how to constitute a good interview and on the other hand to concentrate our questions only in the right direction. Furthermore, we reformulated and narrow the huge amount of interview questions to receive the best answers and results.

The other method used in the project is qualitative data research. This method is closely linked to the first interview, it is sure that the qualitative data cannot be measured, however they “can be recorded in a wide variety of ways including stenography, audio recording, video recording or written notes”¹. Additionally, they helped us to only consider the most fundamental facts of the interview and, therefore, to bring only the written form of the information applicable to our project.

¹ http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/qualdata.php
However, we needed to expand our reading to another book, qualitative data, An Introduction to Coding and Analysis by Carl F. Auerbach and Louise B. Silverstein. This book helped us to comprehend how to better use this complicated method in relation to our two cases and it provided us with a broader view for analyzing the ‘particular’, indeed “qualitative research is particularly well suited to the study of diversity because it does not assume that there is one universal truth to be discovered, but rather it focuses on listening to the subjective experience and stories of the people being studied”\(^2\).

Theories

For reaching a better understanding of the concept of gender neutral we used the interpretative theory mostly in the philosophy chapter. This theory permitted us, on one hand, to understand what the subjects we were studying meant and on the other hand to interpret in a clearer way the meanings of the books and articles that we were reading.

The psychoanalytical theory was a major aid in analyzing the different personalities of the families. In fact, in order to conceive in a more complete manner the various family members, we had to apply a different analysis to each of them.

Another important element is the age. The differences between the generations among the various members of the family involve different behaviors. As a brief example relevant to our report, we will analyze the generation that exist within a family nowadays. The grandparents lived in a society in which games were made of wood mostly without colors, the television had no color either and, therefore, education was not focused on the distinction between genders. Instead the parents have experienced some changes, such as color television and the introduction of new games that were more detailed and defined as to which gender they belonged to. The young generation is mostly virtual, in fact many of the relationships between friends and classmates are experienced online. In addiction. the education that is taught in schools is considered boring and the desire to learn is diminished.

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\(^2\) Carl F. Auberach, Louise B. Silverstein (2003); Qualitative data: an introduction to coding and analysis; page 26; New York University press; New York and London
Nowadays, children have complex and highly technological games. Majority of the advertisements presented in television are deeply intended to encourage the sale of these games depending on age range, gender, and many other variations and all the ads have attractive colors. Therefore, during the analysis of the books and articles and during the transcription of our report we constantly had to have this theory in mind to capture more details as possible.

Debate of cases and literature

It was relatively easy to find general articles and books about the topic, and it was sufficient to search on Google “gender neutral.” However, due to the ease of finding books and articles, it was hardest to narrow our research and choose only the most relevant materials for our project report.

In the first chapter, we have selected three books, one of which was recommended by our professor of philosophy called Delusions of Gender. It helped us to accumulate theoretical material and explain more clearly how to consider the gender. The other book is “Rethinking gender in early childhood education” by Glenda MacNaughton. It describes how the children in young age are not already gender based but they become so through development.

The third and final book is our philosophy & science one, written by Simon Blackburn, Think. As you can understand from the title, this book is about a deep reflection of all the possibilities that concern the philosophical aspect of our concept.

For the second chapter, we decided to focus mostly on the compendium of Subjectivity and learning because, thanks to the dimension course, for this, it analyzed the everyday family life in a current context. In addition, the compendium refers also to the difficulty that the children incur in identifying themselves in a stable and safe way in this modern and increasingly virtual society that is always changing without a pause.

The third chapter is dedicated to our two cases. With these two cases, we aimed to report about normal family type to analyze in detail how parents behave in relation to their child and their consciousness about the type of teaching that they are pursuing and then a particular example of gender neutral parenting in which the son that possessed the most complete freedom of choice and
consequently, the extreme carelessness on the part of parents, to how it led him to the drastic decision to change his gender, respectively.

Through these interviews we were able to critically compare the various data collected and the materials at our disposal.

CHAPTER 1 – WHAT IS GENDER?

Before we begin to explain in detail what the concept of gender means we would like to introduce a brief description to clarify some interests regarding the term.

The first physiologist to use in his analysis the term “gender identity” was Sigmund Freud in 1905, the focus of Freud’s research was psychoanalysis of children. In his book:”Three essays on the theory of sexuality” he describes how the children in the pregenital phase are totally neutral regarding the differences between the genders.

Subsequently, in 1913 the psychotherapist Carl Gustav Jung introduced the complex of Electra, it describes the sharp distinction and collision between body and psyche, however, this clash was turned down by Freud.

The principal aim of our research was to achieve a better understanding of which elements have to be considered when discussing gender and what gender itself is.

The first and easiest definition of gender can be found in the “biological differences between girls and boys”3. People often believe that the mind differs depending on the gender although it is not always appropriate to think that.

We agree that there are reasons to believe that the mind of a female differs from that of the male but there are some scientists and philosophers that disagreed. In fact, as Cordelia Fine reports the assertion of Castelli, “the children are learning nothing about gender from their parents, but are instead picking up on the gendered patterns of their parents’ implicit minds”4.

In our opinion, this assertion easily led to a wider understanding of the reason why the individuals, mostly the parents, affirm that the mind differs by gender. They just strongly believe that the girl

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3 Cordelia Fine; (2011); Delusions of gender; Part 3, Chapter 17; preconceptions and postconceptions; page 189; Icon books Ltd., Omnibus Business Center; United Kingdom

4 Cordelia Fine; (2011); Delusions of gender; Part 3, Chapter 18; parenting with a half-changed mind; page 201; Icon books Ltd., Omnibus Business Center; United Kingdom
would like to have a pink dress and the boy a blue MicroMachines. Instead of asking them their preferences, the parents are unconsciously forcing the child to like the already given toys and to appreciate what their idea of ‘normality’ is for both boys and girls.

The main reason why the children act differently is because of the behavior and lifestyle decisions of the parents imposed them. This would make the children act differently according to the teaching received, but despite that, most of the parents still believe that their sons or daughters possess different minds.

However, it is scientifically proved that both female and male children during these three age phases, newborn, from 0 to 4 weeks, infant, from 4 weeks to 1 year and toddler, from 1 to 3 years, have the same type and structure of mind. They do not differ in any part, two of the same small and undeveloped brains, the only element of diversity is the brain that is located in two different gender’s bodies. This argument brings us to analyze an important element, the mind.

THE MIND

“This world of experience is composed of mental events or events within subjective consciousness. These events in the subject’s consciousness cannot be seen in public”\(^5\). Every human being throughout their first years of life has the same mind structure and, as this assertion also affirms, the diversity between the minds are derived by the different consciousness, experienced during the growth process, that have formed the individual. “Our bodies do not affect our minds”\(^6\) but the action does. The babies in the first three stages do not know anything about the concept of gender and thus which gender they belong to, subsequently, they rely and react on the behaviors seen inside the family, mostly represented by a mother and a father. In fact as Theodor Adorno asserts, “imitation for children is a form of learning, it helps them to shape their way of doing and being”\(^7\). – (Information from http://pollicinoeraungrande.wordpress.com, own translation)

The process of imitation affects both the unconscious and the conscious of the child. In the newborn and infant phases, the baby acts in an unconscious way, he or she imitates the most common gestures and emotions, for instance clapping of hands or laughing, without truly

\(^{5}\) Simon Blackburn; (1999); Think; Chapter 2, Mind; page 50; Oxford University Press; United Kingdom

\(^{6}\) Simon Blackburn; (1999); Think; Chapter 2, Mind; page 60; Oxford University Press; United Kingdom

\(^{7}\) http://pollicinoeraungrande.wordpress.com/2013/09/20/i-bambini-fanno-quello-che-vedono-psicologia-e-imitazione/
understand the exact meaning and reason of it. With the advancement of age, in the preschooler stage, from 4 to 6 years, the conscious part comes into play. The mind of the children is sufficiently developed to be able to link the gestures performed and emotions expressed with the right time and for the right reasons.

(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHi2dxSf9hw)

This imitation, in philosophy, “is called logical behaviorism”\(^8\), and it leads us to think that “we are familiar with the idea that people can share the same sensation although they react somewhat different”\(^9\). For instance, a mother who is suffering for her child because he left the ‘straight way’, is not a behavior that all the mothers have, indeed some mothers do not get so frustrated, but they seek for a confrontation for better understand the motivations that lead his son or daughter to this decision.

In this case a question that may arise is whether gender is biologically or mentally formed.

Obviously, the gender of the child is biologically determined by the gene with which the baby is born, however the behaviors are mostly controlled by the mind of the infant.

The members of a family play a significant role in the development of the children’s mind for two main reasons.

Firstly, for the behavioral actions between the members in a family’s everyday life and secondly, because the decisions on how to raise the infant are pivotal and they will follow the child for his or her entire life.

In our opinion, if the parents apply the gender neutral education to their children, while still young, they would see that gender is not defined at the very first time of the child’s birth but through education.

As Glenda MacNaughton asks in her book “How can we make a difference to children’s behaviours when their genes determine who they are?”\(^10\), indeed, we are not able to.

Although even if the families teach the child the good manners for becoming a ‘normal’ and responsible social individual, in rare cases, it is possible that children will grow up with some mental and genetic differences, for instance it may be that a child possess more female genes than male or that he is attracted to individuals of the same sex. In this specific case the behavioral actions

\(^8\) Simon Blackburn; (1999); Think; Chapter 2, Mind; page 67; Oxford University Press; United Kingdom

\(^9\) Simon Blackburn; (1999); Think; Chapter 2, Mind; page 67; Oxford University Press; United Kingdom

\(^10\) Glenda MacNaughton; (2000); Rethinking gender in early childhood education; Chapter 2, There’s no point trying to change nature, is there?; page 12; Sage publication company; Australia
diversity is recognized only during the adolescent age and their conducts are clearly different from what the society consider ‘normal’. The mind of both boys and girls, in such cases, is fragile and it may lead to radical decisions. Nevertheless, if the teenager has been raised with the gender neutral educational method, he or she is able to make this choices without having the fear to be misjudged by the member of the family. The family members are fundamental in these circumstances because they need to support him or her mentally and psychologically.

This discussion, regarding the possibilities of freedom of choose, led us to the next analysis, if it is really us the one that makes the choices or if there is some external ‘power’.

FREE WILL

“When we think about ourselves, we are conscious of other things as well. We don’t only register the world as we take it to be. We act in it. We concentrate on alternatives. We deliberate and do things. We take control”\textsuperscript{11}.

Each human being believes to be free because of this thought “I stand here, able to raise my arm or not, just as I please. Suppose I do it – thus – then I have felt myself controlling the way events unfolded”\textsuperscript{12}, in short “my consciousness reveals my freedom to me”\textsuperscript{13} therefore, the choices that he made are decided by his will, however, physiology calls into question this freedom. We want to start our analysis showing a model taken from our philosophy book, Think.

As this schema shows, we as adults can manipulate all of the four elements present but we miss the basic ‘setting’ of this, let’s us call it ‘software’, because one is not able to touch or see the other people decisions.

\textsuperscript{11} Simon Blackburn; (1999); Think; Chapter 3, Free Will; page 82; Oxford University Press; United Kingdom

\textsuperscript{12} Simon Blackburn; (1999); Think; Chapter 3, Free Will; page 86; Oxford University Press; United Kingdom

\textsuperscript{13} Simon Blackburn; (1999); Think; Chapter 3, Free Will; page 86; Oxford University Press; United Kingdom

\textsuperscript{14} Simon Blackburn; (1999); Think; Chapter 3, Free Will; page 92; Oxford University Press; United Kingdom
There are two different concepts, on one hand the “interventionist control”\textsuperscript{15} and the “compatibilism”\textsuperscript{16} on the other. The first one assumes that the ‘ghost’ is “outside the realm of nature”\textsuperscript{17} and consequently out of the human body thereby only intervening in rare cases. Therefore, the human throughout his or her life is totally responsible for all the actions performed but not all of them are decided by his or her will. While the second concept focuses on the description of how the human being chooses or reacts in a different way depending on particular events. In fact, the ‘ghost’ that is present inside each one of us is revealed solely in the cases when we act instinctively, as it is believed that our mind does not have the capacity to make such rapid choices.

What we are trying to say is that the initial ‘setting’ is “perhaps events in my childhood, quite outside my control”\textsuperscript{18} and therefore the most important part of one’s life is the education received during the infant phase.

Philosophy is not an exact science as it can only analyze and discuss in depth many issues of which the human beings are not able to answer with certainty.

When arguing about philosophy, no one can be certain of anything, although as previously mentioned, the education that we received when we were infants is fundamental for each one of us. In fact, we possess a background knowledge called “conception of control, inside control”\textsuperscript{19} and this knowledge, in a close collaboration with the mind, supervises and decides to conduct only the actions that we strongly believe to be correct and avoid the wrong ones. This ‘actions control system’ is the result of the type of education that one received, in our case this is gender neutral parenting. In fact, if children have been raised with this method of upbringing, their choices have the potential to be increased in variety due to the extreme distinction between the ‘normality’ of the obligations for male and female, exemplified by society.

This discourse led us, in the next chapter, to discuss in depth the details about the reason why for using this particular method and then trying to find out which families or institutions are using it, carefully paying attention to the influence that society might introduce.

\textsuperscript{15} Simon Blackburn; (1999); Think; Chapter 3, Free Will; page 96; Oxford University Press; United Kingdom
\textsuperscript{16} Simon Blackburn; (1999); Think; Chapter 3, Free Will; page 96; Oxford University Press; United Kingdom
\textsuperscript{17} Simon Blackburn; (1999); Think; Chapter 3, Free Will; page 96; Oxford University Press; United Kingdom
\textsuperscript{18} Simon Blackburn; (1999); Think; Chapter 3, Free Will; page 92; Oxford University Press; United Kingdom
\textsuperscript{19} Simon Blackburn; (1999); Think; Chapter 3, Free Will; page 87; Oxford University Press; United Kingdom
CHAPTER 2 – GENDER NEUTRAL PARENTING AND EDUCATION, WHO AND WHY?

GENDER BASED UPBRINGING

In Cordelia Fine’s book ‘Delusions of gender’ we found that “people’s preferences are not created ex nihilo: they are formed by the society they live in”\(^20\) which originally is about finances, but is a perfect fit for gender as well. When society has a big influence on the way people behave, then it must also have a big influence on the way people perceive gender. It is through society that we connect pink with girls and blue with boys. It is through society that we can see gender roles, it is because of this that we can see that parents buy domestic and nurturing toys for girls and action based and worldwide, such as airplanes and cars, for boys. With this knowledge we can also see that culture has an influence on how we perceive gender. “Cultural realities and beliefs about females and males alter our self-perception, interests and behavior.”\(^21\) This tells us that gender is not only biologically, but it is also socially based. It is society that has based the gender roles and it is society that has given the different colors their meaning and is the one who has given us gender. With this in the back of our heads we are able to better analyze how society affects our gender in our cases.

The way our society is at the moment influences us more than we realize. It is through complete unconsciousness that we can feel the effects every day. Since society has such a big influence on the human beings in it, then the habits are shared for the next generation. We teach our children how boys and girls, even how men and women, should act and what is the appropriate behavior for the genders. We teach them the same habits that we are used to. We teach the children that women are the ones supposed to be at home taking care of the children while men are the ones who are supposed to be in the working world. They learn that men have a bigger chance of doing better at the workplace than females do. We continue following this path since this is the only way we know society. This is also how we can distinguish our society and also the only reason why it will keep affecting us until we make a change in society. The way our society is at the moment is more women are stay-at-home-moms than men, there are more men out working and providing for the

\(^{20}\) Cordelia Fine; (2011); Delusions of gender; Part 1, Chapter 8; Gender Equality 2.0?; page 92; Icon books Ltd., Omnibus Business Center; United Kingdom

\(^{21}\) Cordelia Fine; (2011); Delusions of gender; Part 1, Chapter 8; Gender Equality 2.0?; page 95; Icon books Ltd., Omnibus Business Center; United Kingdom
family. With this, we teach girls that they have certain responsibilities at home and we teach boys that they are the ones who should provide for the family. "Mothers talk more to girls than to boys, and they talk about emotions differently to the two sexes"\textsuperscript{22}, according to this quote, when the mother talks to the children, she does it in different ways. This teaches them from a very young age that there are differences between the genders. We teach the girls that they are more sensitive and they need to solve conflicts using words and we teach the boys that ‘real men’ do not talk about their feelings in the same way and it is not masculine to do so. The boys have to be both physically and mentally strong, and that everywhere is expected a lot from them. There are differences that make harder to understand the opposite gender, especially when we teach them different methods of expressions and conflict solving. When our parents show us these differences in communication then we learn that there is a difference in between genders and this is what we are passing onto the next generation.

GENDER NEUTRAL UPBRINGING

When you want to break the norms of society and raise your child in a different way, there are various methods. Some of the most important factors for bringing a child up gender neutral is changing the language. It is important to remove ‘she’ and ‘he’ so there is distinction between the genders. For example: “Here are the parents of Sasha\textsuperscript{23}, they decided to remove the typical boy and girl objects from the room. They never referred to Sasha as a boy or girl and did not even tell the family if it was a boy or girl. This was an extreme way to go but they only let him decide for his own. They told everybody about the gender when Sasha got 5 years old and began school where they have uniforms.

The extreme way is the more typical way, because people believe that this is the way in which society shapes out genders. However, as Dr. Roberto Marchesini points out: “Nature, (apart from the cases referring to serious diseases, such as hermaphroditism) is made up of boys and girls, men and women will even be a reason. It is not given to us to choose their own sex, but rather to

\textsuperscript{22} Cordelia Fine; (2011); Delusions of gender; Part 3, Chapter 18; Parenting with a half-changed mind; page 199; Icon books Ltd., Omnibus Business Center; United Kingdom

\textsuperscript{23} http://newsfeed.time.com/2012/01/24/parents-who-hid-childs-gender-for-five-years-now-face-backlash/
recognize it, respect it and identify with it, "c'est la vie"24 – (Information from www.uccronline.it, own translation), indeed he strongly disagree with the fact that society has influence on gender, we are born a certain gender and we should, therefore, respect it. The fact that we are born with a gender is one we cannot change, but bringing up a child gender neutral is a way for parent to “teach their children how proper education for growth”25. – (Information from www.uccronline.it, own translation)

In ‘Rethinking Gender in Early Childhood Education’ we have an example of Edna, a girl who wants to try a more gender neutral playtime among the children in kindergarten, she tries by giving the girls a badge so then they can go play with the boys. They are playing with blocks and it is paying off. She is seeing a change in the boys, they are using more of the room, they do not make as much noise and they are friendlier. “I really believe that we can make a difference. We just need to provide them with a strong non-sexist environment to make changes”26 that is the belief that Edna has taking into the kindergarten, but at the same time she had some doubts about if it would actually work. She thinks that if she manages to make playtime more gender neutral this teaching will continue with the children as they get older. She started with block time and that was a success, so she then decided to continue. But as she continues she could see that it turned into a failure. “She felt that biology offered the only sensible explanation for her failure to shift children’s behaviors”27 The method she used was not a perfect method. She did not have a fully understanding of the development of the creating of the identity of children. She only “relied on socialization theory and at times on a simple form of biological determinism”28 with the result of failure since there is so many other theories that come in play.

As Tony Bennett and Diane Watson points out “sociology are caught up in the analysis of the seemingly insignificant routines of everyday life”29 where we can study what happens at home and the methods for upbringing. Here so far it was been the not so important factors, but still have an

24 http://www.uccronline.it/tag/gender-neutral/
25 http://www.uccronline.it/tag/gender-neutral/
26 Glenda MacNaughton (2000); Rethinking gender in early childhood education; Chapter 2, there’s no point trying to change nature, is there?; page 12; Sage publication; Australia
27 Glenda MacNaughton (2000); Rethinking gender in early childhood education; Chapter 2, there’s no point trying to change nature, is there?; page 17-18; Sage publication; Australia
28 Glenda MacNaughton (2000); Rethinking gender in early childhood education; Chapter 2, there’s no point trying to change nature, is there?; page 24; Sage publication; Australia
influence. When we analyze the gender neutral homes we still look into these factors, but they are clearer. It is the color of the bedroom, the way the children are dressed, the influences of society (whether or not they are allowed stereotypical toys), if they are allowed to see TV, all the minor details from life that we do not notice. We use these tools to analyze the methods for gender neutral parenting and the effects.

The way the gender neutral children interact with other children is very hard to say, there are different types of upbringing even within the gender neutral, the degree of neutrality, and since they are allowed to play with anything, they can also play with anyone.

EGALIA

At the kindergarten Egalia in Sweden they are trying to break the normal gender roles. They believe that everybody no matter what gender, ethnicity or sexuality should have the same opportunities, rights and commitments. The gender should not limit you to certain jobs or experiences in life. At Egalia the raising of gender neutral is not only for kids, they believe that the parents should follow the practices at home as well. At Egalia, they believe that if the parents continue with these practices and methods at home, then it will continue throughout the children’s lives. All the children at Egalia learn the same methods of expression, both when it comes to solving a conflict and to express their feelings. They encourage the children to help each other as often as possible and even write to the parents about the progress of their children. The stereotypical roles for men and women are erased and the children learn that everyone has the same values. The children are also encouraged to play house and even with a twist, this means that the normal ‘mom, dad and baby’ can be switched to ‘dad, dad and baby’ or ‘mom, mom and baby’.

Heterosexually norms such as ‘boy’, ‘girl’, ‘he’ and ‘she’ has been removed and instead they only neutral terms such as the name of the children or ‘friends’ and ‘buddy’. The children learn the different situations the parents can go through child friendly stories, they learn about single parents, adoptive children and even about divorced families. This results in the children being more unprejudiced and this leads to them being more acceptable for different and unfortunate situations later on in life at their workplace. - (Information from Egalia’s official website, own translation)
CHAPTER 3 – HOW IT IS DONE? WHAT DOES IT LEADS TO?

With our written interviews we gathered a lot of important information that we are, in this chapter, going to explain in details.

Charlotte Albret

We will start with the analysis of the family of Charlotte Albret and her various methods to raise her one and a half year old daughter with gender neutral education.

When we step into her house we noticed that there were not many feminine colors, the most present color was green. Another thing that attracted our attention were the toys, they were not the normal toys that you may see for a girl, they were mostly made by wood with some neutral color, for instance green, yellow, red and black, and the only ‘technological’ one was a keyboard with many colors corresponding with different notes.

The principal questions that we asked were:

- Why did you decided to give to you daughter gender neutral toys?
- Why did you choose to follow this particular method of education?
- How do you do it?
- Did you do it with consciousness?
- Did you need a particular education for utilizing this particular education method?

In the first question she wrote that the decision was taken with her boyfriend. In fact her boyfriend, Lars, come from a farmer family and therefore he played most of his life with wooden toys. Helene, the daughter, has not many toys. Her principal toys were a wheelie bug with the shape of a ladybug red and black and a little brown farmhouse where she is suppose to indentify which animals go in which places.

The second question was the most interesting of all. In fact Charlotte wrote that she did not plan to make this type of education. The whole gender neutral education started unconsciously, she just gave Helene some cheap, and therefore non-technological, toys. However, some months after, she read a book about gender neutral parenting and education and she recognized that some methods
that the book was underlying were the same as the ones she was applying. After having read carefully the book, on one hand, she began to consciously apply this type of education and on the other, she gained a better knowledge on how to execute this particular parenting method. This leads to the third question where she strictly affirmed that she is not an extremely feminine mother and she do not like the color pink so, willing or not, she will never buy her daughter pink clothes or toys.

She wrote that the majority of the clothes that Helene is wearing are green, yellow, red, orange, etc., or, in easy words, colors that do not involve any kind of positioning in specific genders. Another important method for Charlotte, for doing gender neutral education, is to leave her daughter in her big garden and let her play outdoor and therefore develop her mind outside the home. Without television and especially without the advertisements the little daughter is not going to be influenced by the media and the society standard.

Charlotte also chose a particular day care center, called Anemonen, were Helene and other two male toddlers are followed by a pedagogue. However, even if the day center is trying to apply gender neutral education, Helene is surrounded mostly by male toddlers. As Charlotte wrote, this will help Helene interact with the male gender without truly understanding the difference between her and ‘them’ mostly because all the children present in Anemonen play together without paying attention about the colors of the clothes or with which toys they are playing with.

The fourth question has already been answered earlier. She started to unconsciously give Helene old wooden toys and after that she developed, thanks to a book, a more specific knowledge regarding the argument. From that moment on, she applied gender neutral education consciously, trying to specialize herself with more materials collected from the internet. Charlotte has a professional education in pedagogy, with this particular degree she is qualified to work with children. Thanks to the last question we could easily understand the reason why she is interested in these new type of education. In our opinion parents without these interest will probably continue to apply gender neutral education unconsciously.

Kira Kinch

We had Kira answer a different set of questions, they were the following:
• How was your childhood?
• Was, during your childhood, something not right?
• Did your parents let you choose your own clothes?
• Did your parents give you a gender neutral or gender based education?
• Was changing gender your first decision?
• Did society influence you into your decision to become a girl? If yes, how much and in which manner?

We decided to let her answer to the written question face to face, because on one hand, if we had forgotten to add something we could always do it right away and on the other hand we could always discuss her answer orally.

Her childhood was mostly defined by gender neutral elements and her parents did not force him to do anything gender based, therefore his choices were totally natural. In his social environment, especially school, he felt a ‘not-right behavior’. He had more arguments when talking with girls than with boys and instead of playing with cars he drew flowers and persons.

The second question for us was really important, in fact, as Kira wrote, it is not something that occurs suddenly, but a long process of understanding and deep introspection. Kira also asserted that she felt immediately in the wrong body, already at the age of 4 years old. At this age a child is not yet fully aware of the gender differences, therefore as Kira wrote: “The way in which a family raises their children is definitely an important factor, however it is not the only one, in fact there are too many elements that contribute to form the choices of an individual”30.

Sometimes it is even complicated for the subject to tell, and above all, to remember, the multitude of experiences that participated in composing his, her choices so far.

In fact she could not explain in details what and how she felt but: “It was just not the right body, I was a girl inside”31.

When Kira lived with his parents, he had the total freedom of choice to choose which clothes to go with, his explanation was: “I just liked them”32. A particularity was that when he was home alone,

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30 Kira Kinch, Questionnaire, 20/05/2014
31 Kira Kinch, Questionnaire, 20/05/2014
he loved to ‘steal’ and wear his mother’s dresses and he even liked to admire himself with them on.

A psychoanalysis here should be done, in fact in this case we can understand that the behaviors, within the growth’s process, are becoming more pronounced and clear. In our opinion, it is during this ‘recognition phase’ that Kira realized that he was not in the right body and therefore something had to be done.

Kira’s parents gave her a gender neutral education, they tried to pay attention to not force her through language or behaviors of some gender basis elements. This particular method required a lot of background knowledge, however the parents of Kira did gender neutral upbringing mostly with wooden toys and clothes with not typically male colors.

While Kira was writing the answer to the last question we could see that she was a lot uncertain, therefore we asked her to add a specific paragraph on the reason why she showed this insecurity. She was insecure because of the many various elements that may influence this answer. First of all, he felt wrong in the body in which he was born with. Second of all, society may interfere in many different ways, from the comments or teasing of your friend, to no longer being accepted as a ‘normal’ individual, to not interfere at all.

In fact, another important point was her explanation that if an individual feels ‘not right’ there is nothing that will lead him to change his, her mind, it is an push that comes from the inside, more important than the idea of the society of ‘normality’.

Kira’s friend did not constitute a block in his decision, in fact they accepted the choice, although many of them disagreed. She also wrote: “thanks to the gender neutral upbringing I could easily tell without fear, to my parents, my important decision and I was sure that they will always accept me for who I really am, and from the beginning of this life I felt that I must have been a girl, in fact they helped me a lot though my gender change”.

We can understand, from the case of Kira, that the pushes comes both from the inside and from the society, however the fundamental elements that should always be there are the family members and the friends.

In the last question, Kira wrote an interesting answer about what her opinion was about this case. She wrote that what she experienced was not something coming from the education that she had received, but something biological, in the sense that, even if Kira was born a boy her behavior was

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32 Kira Kinch, Questionnaire, 20/05/2014
33 Kira Kinch, Questionnaire, 20/05/2014
biologically and mentally typical feminine, indeed she acted as a girl in an age in which it is impossible to reach a self-understanding of which gender you belong to.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is difficult to define this topic in a clear way. For understanding all the elements that makes up a person, you should study each individual, because everybody is unique and has received particular methods of growth. Individuals also have had several experiences that have created the adult who he, she is now. With philosophy and science we reached a better understanding of how the mind registers every actions, from childhood to adulthood, and that our actions are often, already decided from the biological gender with which we are born. Furthermore we even questioned if our choices are helped or decided by an entity inside of us. Therefore, thanks to our analysis, we can conclude that the education that the families apply to the children is not the most fundamental element in the life of a child, in fact every little action, phrase and element shapes what each individual will be. The mind is a fragile thing and the choices depends purely on each individual, derived from his or her personal, internal and external, conscious and unconscious experiences. Regarding the free will, even the most expert philosophers didn’t reach an agreement and we do not have not enough experience, nor knowledge, about this argument to give a reasonable answer. Within the subjectivity and learning dimension we found out that the childhood is just one of these factors, society being another and so forth. Anything that happens through life is depending on the various experiences that different individuals encounter during upbringing process. No matter what gender you are born, the way you feel about yourself is the important element for who you are. If you feel like you are a girl, then no matter what, you are a girl. The gender neutral parenting is a way for parents to help children better understand who they are in a younger age and to better help them become themselves. There are many different ways of upbringing and different levels of neutrality which are the main effects. The biological and the feeling of the within biological are what really matters. To be able to easily help ones child is the most important factor for a parent whether they have decided to use gender neutral parenting or not. The analysis showed us which methods were the important ones for gender neutral parenting and the way the parents executed them.
PERSPECTIVATION

The different aspect of life of each individual, due to modernization and globalization, is continuously increasing and diversifying, furthermore “the family as an institution has contributed to the modernization process by providing a place of sanctuary for its members”\textsuperscript{34}. However, due to this runaway and stressful society, the individuals often forget about the family and they do not pay attention to the weakest member of the family, the child. Indeed, because of this careless, the child is lost and he or she will surely suffer of psychological brake down and therefore a cascade of social problems and reckless choices. For instance being left alone, without parental protection, create insecurity and this may lead to being bullied at school, this, afterwards, would probably result in falling into bad habits that unfortunately, nowadays, are available to everyone and subsequently meet ‘bad companies’ and a lot more.

Therefore the aim of our report is to offer a better explanation of all the fragility of the human mind with a psychological approach and a new method of education, with which the children may have the possibilities to be ‘ready’ for make their step in the nowadays society, with a huge quantity of new threats. Our report can lead to a lot of other possible further researches, for instance about family life, other methods of childhood education, studying with a medical point of view the different mind reaction between male or female children and many others.

We have to underline that this is just the result of the analysis from psilosophyscience and subjectivitylearning books and articles, it is not the right and only way to raise a child. However in our humble opinion, gender neutral education is a different and harder way to start, however it will bring to the child more security in recognizing and liking him/herself for what he, she feels to be.

PROGRESSION FOCUS

At the very beginning, we did not have a clear idea on how to develop our project yet we were sure about the dimension that we wanted to use. Since the very first meeting we agreed about focusing on the dimensions of Philosophy and Science and Subjectivity and Learning, mostly because in our

\textsuperscript{34} Laszlo A. Vaskovics (Hrsg.), Lars Dencik; (1997); Familienleitbilder und Familienrealitäten; the position of Families in the Transformation of the modern Scandinavian Welfare States; The “Folkhem” – a transition period in the development of Scandinavian Welfare, chapter 2, page 261; Leske und Budrich; Germany
group three out of four of the members had already used the dimensions of History and Culture and Text and Sign.

We decided to focus on reading the book “the delusions of gender” by Cordelia Fine to hope finding some good ideas. We have to admit that it actually helped us a lot.

In fact, we needed to find some good arguments that could be associated with the chosen dimensions and therefore, we subsequently decided that our focus would have been gender neutral parenting. After two or three meetings we agreed to contact by e-mail Egalia, a well-known kindergarten in Sweden, for better understanding on how they do gender neutral education. Alongside with this we were interested in which toys they used to let the children play.

We decided to use the dimension Philosophy and Science to give a better explanation of the reason why female and male infant choose different toys. To have more detailed data, we thought that it was better to show the four children four different advertisements. The four children had received two different types of education, on one hand gender based and on the other hand gender neutral. We wanted to evaluate, and afterwards compare, the data collected from the various reactions of two boys and two girls of the four commercial both gender based and gender neutral.

After a meeting with our supervisor, he suggested to change the direction focus, because the behavioral reactions of the gender based children are already taken for granted and, therefore, not ‘unknown’ neither particularly interesting. Later on we wrote a list of questions, translated into Swedish, to be sent to Egalia because we needed to have a new focus in our report, unfortunately we were not so lucky to receive any answers from them.

At this stage, more or less, our group has encountered a moment of weakness and sadly we reached the unanimous agreement to split. Two members of our group wanted to divide and we were forced to accept their decision.

After this moment of difficulty we did not entirely follow the old project structure, in fact we modified some old elements and added new ones. With the old group we reached an agreement on how to use Philosophy and Science but we did not have a precise agreement on how to develop the dimension of Subjectivity and Learning. The elements that we modified concerned the reactions of the kids to the advertisements and, instead of analyzing them, we preferred to study in deeper details the differences, if any, between the female and male minds, furthermore we even took into
consideration if individuals are really free to make choices, by analyzing the why of the human actions and decisions.

The new items that we added concerned the dimension of Subjectivity and Learning not yet considered, in fact on the one hand we analyzed the society’s influence to the children raised with a gender neutral education and the two cases of the transgender boy become a girl, Kira, and how the family of Charlotte Albret do gender neutral parenting, on the other. Although we reached an initial agreement on what the problem formulation should be, with the division of the group we had to rethink it. We thought about it during the writing process, however we preferred to formulate it near the end for having a better understanding of the whole project and therefore write a proper problem formulation.

**DISCUSSION**

This is not a matter of parenting but a matter of opinion from individual to individual. The effects of each single element that a child experiences through the education process is also a matter. It is hard to say what is best for the child and the only way to find out is trying. People will never truly agree on which methods are the best and to what level. When we analyzed this argument, with a psychological point of view, it was hard to define precisely what the right and most effective method to apply is. However gender neutral parenting, being a new method, is still an unsure type of education and therefore we can just assert that only by using it the members of a family will be able to find out if it was a good or bad decision. Nowadays we are not able to really understand if gender neutral parenting will be the best choice unless if we do multiple studies over many years and we also should look at which gender neutrality level has to be for the best upbringing of a child.
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