# School, Literature and Sexual Stereotypes. A Didactic Analysis

Lucía Rodríguez Olay[1]   0000-0002-3704-9962
Antonio Nadal Masegosa[2]   0000-0002-2788-0058
[1]University of Oviedo, Oviedo, Spain. 33005 - dpto.cceducacion@uniovi.es
[2]University of Málaga, Málaga, Spain. 29010 - anamp@uma.es

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of the present article is to didactically analyze the responses to a questionnaire of 2,124 fifth and sixth-grade students on the subject under study. Students were asked about some gender stereotypes that appear in literary works to determine the perception that they had about them and to be able to make, in addition, a comparison between the answers of boys and girls. We focused on the results showing how the students are, in all the statements made, quite close to the answer related to agreeing with gender stereotypes, highlighting the fact that they prefer that the main characters in the books should be boys, which we could translate into future male power roles.*
**Keywords:** *Gender; Literature; Primary school; Stereotypes; Student.*

**Escola, Literatura e Estereótipos Sexuais. Análise Didáctica.**
**Resumo:** *O objectivo do presente artigo é analisar didacticamente as respostas a um questionário de 2.124 estudantes do quinto e sexto ano sobre o assunto em estudo. Os estudantes foram questionados sobre alguns estereótipos de género que aparecem em obras literárias para determinar a percepção que tinham sobre eles e para poderem fazer, além disso, uma comparação entre as respostas de rapazes e raparigas. Concentrámo-nos nos resultados mostrando como os estudantes estão, em todas as declarações feitas, bastante próximos da resposta relacionada com a concordância com os estereótipos de género, salientando o facto de preferirem que as personagens principais dos livros sejam rapazes, o que poderíamos traduzir em futuros papéis de poder masculino.*
**Palavras-chave:** *género; literatura; escola primária; estereótipos; estudante.*

**Escuela, Literatura y Estereotipos Sexuales. Análisis Didáctico**
**Resumen:** *El propósito del presente artículo es analizar didácticamente las respuestas a un cuestionario de 2.124 alumnos de quinto y sexto curso sobre el tema estudiado. Se preguntó a los alumnos sobre algunos estereotipos de género que aparecen en las obras literarias para determinar la percepción que tenían sobre ellos y poder hacer, además, una comparación entre las respuestas de niños y niñas. Nos centramos en los resultados que muestran cómo los alumnos están, en todas las afirmaciones realizadas, bastante cerca de la respuesta relacionada con el acuerdo con los estereotipos de género, destacando que prefieren que los protagonistas de los libros sean chicos, lo que podríamos traducir en futuros roles de poder masculino.*
**Palabras clave:** *género; literatura; escuela primaria; estereotipos; alumno.*

## Introduction

The conception of literature as an instrument that helps us to better understand the needs, interests and experiences of children (Teresa COLOMER, 1999) is one of the key points that, linked to the idea of stereotyping from a gender perspective, articulates the objectives of this research. It was considered fundamental to make an analysis of the pupils' opinions on some gender issues that appear in children's and young people's literature and to try to determine whether or not this is influencing the construction of gender stereotypes in these pupils.

It is true that today boys and girls receive a large amount of stimuli and messages through films, television, video games, social networks and literature (Sandra Liliana CUERVO; María Concepción MEDRANO-SAMANIEGO; Ana AIERBE-BARANDIARAN, 2016), which is why it is essential to carry out research that, from a gender perspective, provides a different point of view to these materials and helps to provide critical training that serves to interpret these messages and, in this way, contribute to creating a fairer society.

The present research, therefore, is fundamentally based on the analysis of the perception that the 2124 boys and girls in 5th and 6th grades of Primary School in Spain who took part in this study have of the gender stereotypes that appear in works of Children's and Young People's Literature (hereinafter, CYAL).

Through literature, ideals about how boys and girls or men and women should behave, act and be have been, and continue to be, transmitted. Even before one can read, in childhood, many of these roles are internalised through the family environment and then transferred to the school environment, which is why it is essential that critical reading is taught from the outset (Daniel CASSANY, 2018).

In this regard, several studies have addressed the differences between boys and girls and their attitudes towards reading (Teresa ARTOLA; Santiago SASTRE; Jesús María, ALVARADO, 2016; Steve GRAHAM; Virginia, BERNINGER; Robert, ABBOTT, 2012; Tula MERISUO-STORM, 2006; Tula MERISUO-STORM; Marjaana SOININEN, 2012). One of their common findings is that girls, from an early age, have a more positive attitude towards reading; furthermore, in other studies this is reaffirmed by a loss of interest in reading by boys as they get older (MERISUO-STORM, 2006).

It is also important to highlight for the present study those studies that show how boys and girls have different reading interests and tend to choose different types of books (Robin BOLTZ, 2007; Kay CHICK; Rose HEILMAN-HOUSER, 2000; Kathleen MOHR, 2006; Jane OAKHILL; Alison PETRIDES, 2007; Eleni KARPOUZA; Aikaterini, ZAMPANIOTI; Andreas, KARAKITSIOS, 2014). They show that girls tend to choose stories that are related to friendship and family, and boys usually prefer realistic stories over fiction, with comic books, action books and horror books being particularly successful (ARTOLA et al., 2016; MERISUO-STORM, 2006; Wendy SCHWARTZ, 2002; Michael SULLIVAN, 2004). Another key finding from research along these lines is that boys are more likely to conform to the stereotypes attributed to them as boys, especially when they are in public or with a group of friends (Marilyn CHAPMAN et al., 2007; MOHR, 2006).

Proposing a study from a gender perspective, in this case through CYAL, seeks to highlight the differences between boys and girls that are still present in our society and responds to the consideration of feminist literary criticism to address stereotypes in CYAL works in order to investigate the role of women and men and their possible influence on younger readers (Eneko FERNÁNDEZ-ARTIGAS; Xabier, ETXANIZ; Arantzazu, RODRÍGUEZ-FERNÁNDEZ, 2019). In addition, the fact that we have been able to count on such a large sample of students provides us with remarkable results that can serve as a starting point for future research.

## Gender Stereotypes

The idea of gender stereotype is defined as one of the principles with which people build their way of being and their identity; its development has to do with an individual conception, but also with a social one, because it is in the environment that surrounds each person that unfounded ideas and beliefs are generated and end up being taken as absolute truths (Mila AMURRIO-VÉLEZ et al., 2012). This also means that they take root in society, are considered valid and are perpetuated, reproducing themselves almost automatically (Inmaculada ALEMANY; María del Carmen ROBLES; María Adela , DE LA FLOR, 2019), since they are imposed on people from birth so that they can determine their way of acting and their desires (Marina SUBIRATS, 1994).

These beliefs are key for people, for their conception of the world and of themselves (Blanca GONZÁLEZ, 1999), and therefore they must be addressed from an early age so as not to generate differences that imply supremacy of one group over another, as is the case in today's society where it could be considered that patriarchy determines much of that way of behaving and sets the rules, this term being understood as a system of government based on the authority of men (Araceli GONZÁLEZ, 2013).

Studies such as those by Maite Garaigordobil and Jone Aliri (2011) show how gender stereotypes are related to sexist attitudes and sexism, which is defined as a prejudice against people based on their sex (Ilse GONZÁLEZ; Rolando DÍAZ, 2018), in our case, against women and girls. Nowadays, not only the family or the school is decisive in the transmission of these ideas, but also literature, television, cinema, video games and social media, the last playing an increasingly important role (Sandra Liliana CUERVO et al., 2016). It is therefore essential that research and studies are carried out with a gender perspective, didactically analyzing and critically interpreting the information and influences that children receive to help them on their way to becoming people who build a more just and egalitarian society (Audrey DENTITH et al., 2016).

## Gender and Stereotypes: How to Approach Them from the Texts

This article deals with some stereotypes that appear in CYAL and with the perception fifth and sixth-grade primary school children have of them. Specifically, the research has focused on analysing the answers to issues such as leadership, groups of boys and girls or the abilities of each one, following part of the proposal made by Pilar Colás and Patricia Villaciervos (2007), which tackles the gender stereotypes present in the CYAL through six areas: body, social behaviour, skills and abilities, expression of emotions, management of emotions and social responsibility.

From the age of three, boys and girls begin to learn the basics about gender stereotypes in their environment. This knowledge intensifies and becomes more radical around the age of seven, when they are more rigid about male and female roles. Around the age of 10-12, once they pass this stage, boys and girls begin to be more flexible and more receptive to changes and the breaking down of stereotypes (Rainer BANSE et al., 2010); therefore, it is key to influence the education of students at this age, since, although they tend to seek out patterns and activities that relate to their sex and emphasize the differences between them, the influence of gender stereotypes and patterns depends on many factors -related to their environment- that can be influenced and addressed from school or family (Carol Lynn MARTIN; Diane N. RUBLE; Joel SZKRYBALO, 2002).

From the 1970s onwards, the feminist movement began to give importance to and incorporate into its agenda the issue of education and the construction of gender stereotypes in schools, focusing on the socialisation of sexual roles. It was in the 1980s that criticism began to emerge of this theory as it considered that it greatly simplified a complex concept that had to be tackled in various ways and with other strategies that went beyond modelling or repetition.

The post-structuralist postulates appear, then, taking up the basic idea that people construct their identity in an active way and interacting with others, so this discourse is taken as a fundamental constructor of gender identity. According to María del Carmen Rodríguez (2006), in contrast to the theory of the socialisation of sexual roles, the post-structuralist theory advocates three fundamental issues: the analysis and discussion of texts as the core of the co-educational project, discussion as a means of deconstructing the text, and reading and writing as inseparable processes that must be addressed in a co-educational project.

## Children's and Young People's Literature and Their Influence on the Construction of Stereotypes

Literature has been a key element in the transmission of the leading ideologies, values, traditions or culture in society (Edmore MUTEKWE; Constance MUTEKWE, 2012). It can be considered also a fundamental part in the development of children's socialization and identification with diverse gender roles, which will impact on their future academic or professional aspirations (Tichatonga NHUNDU, 2007). CYAL is fundamental in the early years in order to construct correct reference models for interpreting the world because there is a relationship between the construction of the personality of young readers and the construction of meaning that occurs with literature (Pedro CERRILLO, 2007).

It is possible to consider that children learn and reproduce a series of behavioural patterns rooted in patriarchy and androcentric worldviews (Carlos FONSECA, 2005), what could be defined as "hegemonic masculinity" (Luis BONINO, 2002, p. 7). In this way, for example, they do not show their feelings by not considering it masculine, or they are more aggressive or authoritative because they internalise that this demonstration of virility is what is expected of them as men, as is heterosexuality, the use of violence or risky behaviour (Vicenta GARRIDO, 2020).

The above-mentioned behaviours are intensified in children's social environments; it is essential to rethink and face the conditions in which gender determines or does not determine the social structure of a child to influence those in which they promote inequality (Michael A. MESSNER, 2000). From an early age, children are given either boys' toys or girls' toys with a clear identification on caring, in the case of girls, or on action, in the case of boys. To this must be added the role of the father and mother with respect to work or household and school tasks, a fundamental place of social and personal development for children. If stereotypes are not destroyed in these areas, they are likely to continue to be perpetuated as they are today (Montserrat MORENO, 2009; Josefa QUESADA, 2014).

It is precisely in the field of education, where there are multiple research studies that point out how there are gender differences in the choice of studies or even in the self-perception of students, who tend to identify with greater ability in science and mathematics for boys and more in literature and reading for girls (Jacquelynne S. ECCLES, 2009; Rebecca LAZARIDES; Fani LAUERMANN, 2019; Johan KORHONEN et al., 2016; Herbert W. MARSH, 1986; MARSH et al., 2015). In this respect, it is important to transform these gender-determined issues that relate to future choices or performance in some subjects in order for students to do as well as possible in school (Anna WIDLUNDA et al., 2020). In addition, such low or high expectations about particular subjects or about performance in general may hinder or promote learning, further accentuating a potential

gap (Sarah GENTRUP *et al.*, 2020). Educational inequalities are undoubtedly determined by the difference in teachers' expectations of their students (Hester BOER *et al.*, 2010; Sarah GENTRUP; Camila RJOSK, 2018; Francesca MUNTONI; Jan RETELSDORF, 2018).

The CYAL, as a representation of reality and the world (COLOMER, 1999), helps boys and girls to construct their own imaginary and conception of gender with the examples shown to them in the texts of how men and women should behave. The fact that the CYAL has far fewer recognized female authors, or fewer female protagonists to whom certain stereotypes are attributed, contributes to a view of increasing male power (Fátima ARRANZ, 2015). It is therefore essential that alternative ways of interpreting these roles should be presented (Alexis WING, 1997), and this can be done through a gender perspective, which allows these stereotypes to be addressed and their possible influence on younger readers to be determined (FERNÁNDEZ-ARTIGAS, *et al.*, 2019), and at the same time everyone can work on their deconstruction and generate a space for reflection and intervention that allows young readers to interpret these texts in a profound way, so that they can have an impact on any sexist aspects that may exist which, on many occasions, end up going unnoticed or being treated as if they were natural and normal (Dona ALVERMANN *et al.*, 1997).

There are several ways in which gender roles are perpetuated over time in the CYAL, not only in the words used, but also taking into account the covers or illustrations, which can designate stereotypes attributed to the masculine or feminine. Thus, it is more common for male characters to appear fixing things, or going on adventures, while female characters often appear in tasks involving caring for others (Taylor BERRY; Julia WILKINS, 2017).

In CYAL's works, boys often solve problems independently and also play the role of the hero by helping girls or other equals to solve problems; women usually need, or end up needing, the help of a male to be able to fix some complex situations they have to face, an idea that is reinforced by the common and frequent use of adjectives such as proud, big, fierce and angry, for the male characters, while for the female ones terms such as weak, scared, sweet and beautiful are used (Diane TURNER-BOWKER, 1996).

## Literature review

Since the 1970s, authors such as John Money and Anke Ehrhadt (1972), Eleanor Maccoby and Carol Jacklin (1974) or Rhoda Unger (1979) have addressed the concepts of sex and gender and the acquisition of patterns and stereotypes attributed to the latter. Leslie Mcarthur and Sue Eisen (1976), Marylee Ashby and Bruce Wittmaier (1978), Jane Connor and Lisa Serbin (1978) showed, in their different studies, the importance and impact of gender roles that appeared in the narrative, through the presentation and description of male and female characters. Authors such as Weitzman, *et al.* (1972), in the United States, began to investigate gender stereotypes in picture books for pre-school children as they "considered that these had an important role in the early socialization of gender roles as they were vehicles for the presentation and conservation of social and cultural values" (quoted in Rosalí LEÓN, 2018, p. 350). Kathryn Scott and Shirley Feldman-Summers (1979) determined how the reading of works in which female protagonists played roles that are traditionally not attributable to girls (researchers, explorers...) influences the gender perception of boys and girls. Also, in the 1980s, this subject was studied from disciplines such as psychology, where we can mention the research made by Janet Hyde and Marcia linn (1986).

In any state of the art about our object of study, it is possible to mention the results of the study carried out by Kay Bussey and Albert Bandura (1999), in which they show that childhood is constantly exposed to gender stereotypes linked to the media, video games or books. Twenty years later, the situation continues to be daunting, adding musical styles and videos in which the woman is a mere object (Jon ILLESCAS, 2019).

In the first decades of the 21st century, several researches and papers, carried out both in America and in Europe, have dealt with the analysis of several CYAL books from a gender perspective (Amanda DIEKMAN; Sarah MURNEN, 2004; Kay CHICK; Timothy, SLEKAR; Eric, CHARLES, 2010; Janice MCCABE *et al.*, 2011). In our country, investigations by Colomer (1999) and Colomer; Isabel Olid (2009) show that, despite the fact that the image offered by the current CYAL shows some progress in overcoming discrimination against women, it is still far from being considered as promoting an egalitarian image. The results of researching from several authors (Kay CHICK; Timothy, SLEKAR; Eric, CHARLES, 2010; COLOMER; OLID, 2009; Katarina ERIKSSON, 2008) corroborate the background to which everything feminine has traditionally been relegated (Sue WHARTON, 2005), while qualitative research such as the one carried out by Teresa GONZÁLEZ (2016) points out how the CYAL offers models, through the characters, with whom young people can identify or refuse.

The conclusion reached by various experts is that, in one way or another, the CYAL works that show and use these stereotypes are limiting the possibility of boys and girls to interpret the world freely, since they will be doing so with premises that are attributed to each gender as if

it were the correct pattern of behaviour, which, if not properly addressed, would contribute to increasing the inequality between men and women (Laura HARUNA-BANKE; OZEWE, 2017).

If one adapts a perspective of the historical evolution of studies of gender representation in children's books, it can be seen that, although the boundaries between gender roles and stereotypes are slowly being crossed, there is still a long way to go in the area of parity in the presence and representation of female and male characters. On the one hand, new models of masculinity are being constructed that include traits or characteristics traditionally associated with the feminine, but on the other hand models of femininity are still not equally expanded, resulting in a lack of positive and constructive role models for women instead of a blurred idea of gender, where women simply adopt male roles and stereotypes while that which traditionally represented femininity disappears or is relegated to a perception of the negative and that which is to be avoided for both genders (LEÓN, 2018).

In this regard, two could be the fundamental conclusions of the studies cited here. On the one hand, it is essential that boys and girls are presented with alternative ways of interpreting the roles that, to a greater or lesser extent, do appear (WING, 1997) and, on the other hand, this can be done through a gender perspective, which makes it possible to address these stereotypes and determine their possible influence on the youngest readers (FERNÁNDEZ-ARTIGAS et al., 2019).

For this reason, it is important to work on the deconstruction of texts and generate a space for reflection and intervention that allows us to interpret them in a profound way so that we can have an impact on the sexist aspects that may exist and that, on many occasions, end up going unnoticed or are treated as if they were natural and normal (ALVERMANN et al., 1997), remembering that it is possible, through CYAL, to transform the unequal cultural representations of the curriculum.

## Method

Over a one-year period, fifth and sixth-grade students in 17 state-subsidised schools in Spain were questioned through statements which included various gender stereotypes and which were related to the preferences when choosing a book, and to the perception of the literary work. The aim was to determine two basic objectives within this research: on the one hand, to see the degree of agreement or disagreement of the students and, on the other, to assess whether there was a difference between the results of boys and girls.

This questionnaire was based on block 3 of the one carried out by Artola et al., (2018), inspired by the one that Merisuo-storm and Soininem (2012) had carried out for a research on attitudes and reading habits in Finland. The questions proposed in Artola, et al., (2018) validated questionnaire on attitudes and interests towards reading, specifically those grouped under the heading of reading interests, served to adapt those included in the block under analysis in this research. The items were prepared on the basis of the bibliography consulted and on the statements made in the research (Cecilia AZORÍN, 2016; Danielle CLODE; Shari ARGENT, 2016; Rocío MADOLELL; Miguel Ángel, GALLARDO; Inmaculada, ALEMANY, 2020). The subject of analysis contained 11 questions on issues that had to do with reading. The questions were answered according to a 4 option Likert scale, where 1 was in disagreement, 2, little agreement, 3, quite agree and 4, very much agree. The degree of reliability of the entire questionnaire was analysed using Cronbach's alpha statistician. A value of 0.853 was obtained, this level being considered between good and excellent (Darren GEORGE; Paul MALLORY, 2003; Joseph GLIEM; Rosemary GLIEM, 2003), which reinforces the intention of this article to carry out a didactic analysis, so that the results can be learned, apprehended, reproduced and thus contribute to the general learning of the academic community and society.

## Participants

The sample consisted of 2124 pupils from fifth and sixth grade, students of 17 concerted schools of Spain; 1199 were fifth-grade pupils and 952 were sixth-grade pupils.

51.6% (N=2124) were boys and 48.4% (N=2124) were girls. The age range was between 10 and 13 years, with an average of 10.9 and a standard deviation of 0.719.

### Data Analysis

Of the eleven items that make up this block, the following descriptors were calculated: mean, standard deviation, asymmetry, kurtosis and range. Subsequently, parametric statistical tests were applied given the high number of participants (N=2,124). To determine the differences between male and female students, the Student's t-test was applied, taking into account that the criterion of equality of variances was already applied.

IBM SPSS 20 for Windows was the software used to perform all analyses at a statistical significance level of 0.05.

## Results and discussion

### Descriptive statistics

The average score of the scale shows an opinion close to agreement (M=2.56; T.D. =, 0.10). All values are found above M=2.3, with only two items scoring less than M=2.5. These items are number 1. *I prefer the female protagonists to be the leaders in the books* (M=2.35; T.D. =1.277) and number 5. *There are some things in the books that girls cannot do* (M=2.46; T.D. =1.050). On the other hand, there are two items that obtain higher scores: item 2. *I like that in books the boys are the ones who are in charge* (M=2.72; SD=1.2) and item 9. *I like that the gangs that appear in the books are mixed (with boys and girls)* (M=2.73; SD=0.75).

The close-to-agreement score on all items corroborates that boys' and girls' exposure to gender roles in CYAL makes them assume that, socially, there are more desirable ways of behaving than others and that, depending on whether they are boys or girls, they are expected to behave in a certain way. If girls do not perceive female characters as having leadership and authority without being rejected by the other characters, they will hardly have positive role models in CYAL which they could imitate (BERRY; WILKINS, 2017).

**Table 1** - Descriptive statistics *ítems*

| | M | SD. | Asymmetry | | Kurtosis | | Range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Std. | ST. | Std. | ST. | |
| 1. I prefer female protagonists to be the leaders in books. | 2.35 | 1.277 | .203 | .053 | -1.646 | .106 | 3 |
| 2. I like the boys to be in charge in books. | 2.72 | 1.212 | -.130 | .053 | -1.604 | .106 | 3 |
| 3. Books show the world as it is | 2.70 | 1.218 | -.164 | .053 | -1.583 | .106 | 3 |
| 4. In books boys and girls behave as they are in everyday life. | 2.58 | 1.266 | -.072 | .053 | -1.658 | .106 | 3 |
| 5. There are some things in books that girls can't do. | 2.46 | 1.050 | .346 | .053 | -1.146 | .106 | 3 |
| 6. There are some things in books that boys can't do. | 2.54 | 1.070 | .271 | .053 | -1.294 | .106 | 3 |
| 7. The male characters are funnier than the female characters. | 2.51 | 1.016 | .463 | .053 | -1.130 | .106 | 3 |
| 8. The female characters are funnier than the male characters. | 2.58 | 1.071 | .283 | .053 | -1.359 | .106 | 3 |
| 9. I like that the gangs in the books are mixed (with boys and girls). | 2.73 | .752 | -1.518 | .053 | 1.395 | .106 | 3 |
| 10. I like the gangs in the books to be all boys. | 2.53 | .945 | .697 | .053 | -.993 | .106 | 3 |
| 11. I like the gangs in the books to be all-girl gangs. | 2.56 | .994 | .509 | .053 | -1.169 | .106 | 3 |

**#PraTodoMundoVer** Table whose columns represent the mean values of average, standard deviation, asymmetry, Kurtosis and range and in the rows are the overall results of the eleven items in which statements are made about gender issues that appear in the CYAL books and to which the students had indicated their degree of agreement or disagreement.

The fact that item *I like that in books the boys are the ones who are in charge* gets a score close to 3 corroborates the stereotype that links power with the masculine gender. This trait is also linked to qualities that have to do with objectivity, logic or action, as opposed to the feminine, which is identified with the emotional, the emotive and relationships with others (Isabelle PLANTE *et al.*, 2009).

## Gender differences

In the total variable, male and female students have practically the same median (M=2.56; T.D. =0.096) and (M=2.57; T.D. =0.015).

Of the 11 items, seven show significant differences: 1; 2; 4; 7; 8; 10 and 11. Four of the items show non-statistically significant differences: 3; 5; 6 and 9.

In 54.54% of the items (n=6), women score higher than men, four of them being statistically significant (p<0.05) and showing close-to-agreement opinions.

Two of them are not statistically significant (item 3 and item 9). The other 45.45% of items (n=5) are scored higher by men, with opinions also close to strongly agree. Of these five items, three are statistically significant (p<0.05) and two are not (item 5 and item 6).

**Table 2** - Comparisons of means between sexes for each of the items

|  | Sex | M | SD. | t | gl |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I prefer female protagonists to be the leaders in books. | Male | 2.35 | 1.313 | .000 | .059 |
|  | Female | 2.34 | 1.239 |  |  |
| 2. I like the boys to be in charge in books. | Male | 2.62 | 1.283 | .000 | -3.712 |
|  | Female | 2.82 | 1.124 |  |  |
| 3. Books show the world as it is | Male | 2.60 | 1.194 | .011 | -3.913 |
|  | Female | 2.81 | 1.235 |  |  |
| 4. In books boys and girls behave as they are in everyday life. | Male | 2.56 | 1.241 | .001 | -.553 |
|  | Female | 2.59 | 1.292 |  |  |
| 5. There are some things in books that girls can't do. | Male | 2.51 | 1.062 | .011 | 2.190 |
|  | Female | 2.41 | 1.035 |  |  |
| 6. There are some things in books that boys can't do. | Male | 2.57 | 1.076 | .214 | 1.220 |
|  | Female | 2.51 | 1.062 |  |  |
| 7. The male characters are funnier than the female characters. | Male | 2.51 | 1.073 | .000 | -.253 |
|  | Female | 2.52 | .953 |  |  |
| 8. The female characters are funnier than the male characters. | Male | 2.65 | 1.095 | .000 | 2.727 |
|  | Female | 2.52 | 1.041 |  |  |
| 9. I like that the gangs in the books are mixed (with boys and girls). | Male | 2.73 | .762 | .268 | -.343 |
|  | Female | 2.74 | .741 |  |  |
| 10. I like the gangs in the books to be all boys. | Male | 2.59 | .988 | .000 | 3.200 |
|  | Female | 2.46 | .893 |  |  |
| 11. I like the gangs in the books to be all-girl gangs. | Male | 2.55 | .957 | .000 | -.039 |
|  | Female | 2.56 | 1.032 |  |  |

**#PraTodoMundoVer** Table whose columns represent the mean values of average, standard deviation, statistical and standard error and in the rows there are eleven items in which statements are made about gender issues that appear in the CYAL books and to which the students had indicated their degree of agreement or disagreement; these rows are, in turn, divided between males and females.

As mentioned in the previous table, all the items have scores close-to-agreement, and the data for boys and girls are very similar in almost all suggested statements. There are seven items which show significant differences: 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 10 and 11.

Two are the questions that show the greatest difference: item 3, *Books show the world as it is*, which, although not significant, presents a notable difference between the opinions of girls and boys, with girls' opinion being closer-to-agreement to that of boys (2.81) as opposed to 2.60 for boys, and item 2, *I like that in books the boys are the ones who are in charge*, which does present a significant difference. The result of 2.82 for girls compared to the 2.62 for boys shows a clear identification of leadership with masculinity and shows how this stereotype is present and ingrained in the pupils questioned.

In table 3 an analysis of men's and women's mean value is made in relation to the total of each item.

**Table 3** - Analysis of mean value of men and women in relation to the total of each item

|  | Males Test Value = 2.56 | | | Females Test Value = 2.57 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | t | Sig. (b) | D. A. | t | Sig. (b) | D. A. |
| 1. I prefer female protagonists to be the leaders in books. | -5.356 | .000 | -.226 | -5.840 | .000 | -.212 |
| 2. I like the boys to be in charge in books. | 1.583 | .000 | .246 | 7.019 | .114 | .061 |
| 3. Books show the world as it is | 1.220 | .000 | .240 | 6.240 | .223 | .044 |
| 4. In books boys and girls behave as they are in everyday life. | .055 | .578 | .022 | .556 | .957 | .002 |
| 5. There are some things in books that girls can't do. | -1.644 | .000 | -.162 | -5.031 | .101 | -.053 |
| 6. There are some things in books that boys can't do. | .315 | .089 | -.056 | -1.702 | .752 | .010 |
| 7. The male characters are funnier than the female characters. | -1.626 | .083 | -.052 | -1.733 | .104 | -.053 |
| 8. The female characters are funnier than the male characters. | 2.572 | .113 | -.052 | -1.587 | .010 | .085 |
| 9. I like that the gangs in the books are mixed (with boys and girls). | 7.308 | .000 | .169 | 7.324 | .000 | .168 |
| 10. I like the gangs in the books to be all boys. | 1.077 | .000 | -.109 | -3.909 | .282 | .032 |
| 11. I like the gangs in the books to be all-girl gangs. | -.182 | .673 | -.014 | -.422 | .856 | -.005 |

**#PraTodoMundoVer** Table whose columns represent the male and female values of average, standard deviation, statistical, bilateral standard error and difference in average and in the rows there are eleven items in which statements are made about gender issues that appear in the CYAL books and to which the students had indicated their degree of agreement or disagreement.

In the case of boys, only two items show significant differences between the group's total mean and the item's mean: item 1 and item 9. The result is negative in item 1, while in item 9 it is almost 7.5, being thus the value with the highest score. In other words, male pupils like the fact that gangs of boys and girls are portrayed, but they disagree with the fact that the protagonist of the story is a girl, something which, as we will see below, also occurs with female pupils.

In the case of women there are 6 items that have a significant difference between the total mean and the mean of each of their items. These 6 items are: 1, 2, 3, 5, 9 and 10.

Particularly noteworthy is the fact that girls believe that books show the world as it is, which corroborates the influence and importance of CYAL and what is represented in it for pupils of this age group.

Although there is a clear inclination for boys to appear as leaders in the works and to be the ones in charge, female students do not consider that there are things they cannot do, as shown by the data obtained in item 5.

## Conclusions

The research was based on two fundamental objectives: on the one hand, to find out, through an *ad hoc* questionnaire, what perception boys and girls had of some of the gender stereotypes that appear in CYAL works and, at the same time, to determine whether there were differences in the reception and appreciation of these stereotypes between boys and girls.

The results have shown that the stereotypes included in the statements that the students were asked about are highly internalised, reaching scores close-to-agreement in all cases, and also presenting significant differences in which girls show a clear identification of the masculine with leadership and command.

The CYAL is an element that allows multiple methodological possibilities and that can be used as a fundamental tool to work on the construction and deconstruction of stereotypes from an early age; therefore, it is essential that it be used on a regular basis, both at school and in the family environment, so that boys and girls can have multiple behavioural models and therefore do not identify certain roles with the idea of being a man or a woman (Guillermo SOLER-QUÍLEZ, 2020). In this way, it would also prevent these identifications from later determining the choice

of an academic career or profession, and even the performance in some subjects that are stigmatised by attributing gender characteristics to them, generating gender gaps between boys and girls in the school environment (Delphine MARTINOT; Michelle DÉSERT, 2007).

The current society considers these stereotypes as normal and therein lies one of its main problems, since boys and girls internalise those stereotypes and make them their own, understanding that this is what is expected of them, something that is also reflected in the works of CYAL, because those who write them have also assumed these ideas and reflect them in their works as a sign of the society or culture in which they are, showing in many cases how inequality is something that is deeply rooted in both men and women (HARUNA-BANKE; OZEWE, 2017).

The promotion of equality by breaking down stereotypes is something that must be done actively in the classroom in order to contribute to educating students who seek a fairer society. This idea is already included in the Spanish Organic Law 8/2013, of 9 December, for the improvement of educational quality, as an amendment to article 1, section l) of the Organic Law 2/2006, of 3 May, on Education: "The development, at school, of values that promote effective equality between men and women, as well as the prevention of gender violence". This is, therefore, an issue on which the educational community must remain focused and seek strategies and training to be able to address, in a cross-cutting way, the gender perspective.

It should be taken into account that the school is a place where the cultural models determined by society are maintained (Pierre BOURDIEU; Jean PASSERON, 2009) and it is there where, bearing in mind that we are social beings, boys learn to use the privileges they have because of their gender, while girls are educated to remain submissive (Catalina MONTENEGRO-GONZÁLEZ; Alejandra CORBALÁN-NAVIA, 2020). It is, therefore, essential that schools have inclusive environments to assist in building a more pluralistic society in which gaps or marginalisation of certain groups are eliminated (Stephen Adam CRAWLEY, 2020).

Research such as the one presented here aims to point to future lines of work that contribute to the promotion of a reflection from part of the educational community and the society in general, on the reading of CYAL and its influence in the consolidation and internalisation of various gender stereotypes in boys and girls. The fewer these stereotyped ideas are, the freer children will be able to grow up and, therefore, we will be able to promote a freer and more egalitarian society.

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**Lucía Rodríguez Olay** (rodriguezlucia@uniovi.es) is a PhD in Philology from the University of Oviedo. Associate Professor at the University of Oviedo in the Department of Educational Sciences. In 2011 she obtained a Master's Degree in Equality of Women and Men from the University of the Basque Country. She is currently working on her second doctorate within the Equity and Innovation doctoral programme with a doctoral thesis on current children's and young people's literature and its influence on the creation of gender stereotypes in primary school pupils.

**Antonio Nadal Masegosa** is a PhD in Pedagogy and Professor at the University of Malaga in the Department of Theory and History of Education and Methods of Research and Diagnosis in Education, Faculty of Educational Sciences. Master in Management of International Cooperation and NGOs (University of Granada, Spain). Former Visiting Research Fellow of the Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice (School of Politics and International Relations, University of Nottingham, UK). Author of two books, more than 30 book chapters and more than 10 journal articles.