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Inequities of Contemporary French Women

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CLAREMONT McKENNA COLLEGE
INEQUITIES OF CONTEMPORARY FRENCH WOMEN

SUBMITTED TO
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AND
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Introduction

As of 2010, women make up 49.76 percent of the world's population, many of these women are underrepresented among high-level, leadership positions in places such as Mali, Yemen, Ethiopia, or, in other words, less developed, third world, countries. However, women's absence amongst high-level, leadership positions still exists in wealthy, developed countries as well. In my thesis I will examine the level of representation of women in various realms of France's society.

France is an industrial, well-developed country, yet it ranks 46th in the World Economic Forum's 2010 gender equality report,¹ meaning that about half of France's population are deprived of equal opportunities. As human beings, women have the right to equal opportunities and the chance to achieve everything they can. The French nation was even established upon the notion of "liberté, égalité, and fraternité," so France has no excuse for denying half of its population equal status. France as a prosperous, developed nation should be a model to countries that are poor and still developing, especially in terms of human rights development. Unfortunately, in its current state, France's human rights development for women appears to be no better than most less developed countries. The fact that France continues to lack gender equality suggests that gender equality still remains an issue in both developed nations and developing nations.

In each chapter I will address the current situation in a particular area of French society, discuss the reasons for this current situation, and then conclude by discussing attempted efforts to solve the current problems. The evidence I present will illustrate French women's contemporary status in education, economics, politics, and society in an effort to prove that

¹ Katrin Bennhold, "Where Having It All Doesn't Mean Having Equality," *New York Times*, October 11, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/12/world/europe/12iht-ffrance.html?_r=2&pagewanted=print (accessed October 12, 2010).

French women have still not achieved a status that is equal to men. I discovered that, within the French education system, French women have a high rate of participation in higher education, which is consistent with the French opinion that education is equally important for girls and boys.² In the French work force, about 65 percent of the female population participate³, but tend to encounter obstacles that keep them confined in low status occupations and prevent them from being able to advance into high-level positions.

In French politics, women have limited access to leadership positions and only constitute about 19 percent of the members of national parliament.⁴ French politics is dominated by a male elite that is hesitant to increase women's participation in the government, resulting in a major gap between the high percentage of female graduates and participants in the work force and the low percentage of female political representatives. In everyday French society, French women battle gender discrimination on a daily basis. This observation is consistent with the recent Pew Research Survey that states about 75 percent of the French population view French men as having a better life than French women.⁵

I support these findings with statistical data that demonstrate the current male to female representation within each area of French society. The statistical data I present in each of my chapters indicate that France has not yet achieved the norm for equal status between men and women. The norm for equal status should ideally be 50:50 male to female representation in society, but as of 2010, the best equality norm that has been achieved by countries such as

² Pew Global Attitudes Project. *Gender Equality Universally Embraced, But Inequalities Acknowledged* (Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2010). <http://pewglobal.org/2010/07/01/gender-equality/> (accessed Nov. 12, 2010).

³ Appendix B, Table 5.

⁴ Appendix C, Table 1.

⁵ Pew Global Attitudes Project. *Gender Equality Universally Embraced, But Inequalities Acknowledged*.

Iceland, Norway, and Finland is 50:40 male to female representation.⁶ As a developed nation founded upon equality, France should have 50:40 male to female representation, but as my statistical data indicates, this is not the case. Most of my statistical data directly represents the proportion of women present in various realms of French society, particularly over the past ten years.

For the remainder of the introduction I will present an overview of the history of French women's battle for equality in education, in the work force, in politics, and in society.

Foundation of France's Women's Movement

Origins of the feminist movement in France can be traced back to the 14th century French poet Christine de Pizan, who was the first female author in France to make a living through writing. Although, the roots of France's women's movements seem to begin during the French Revolution since it was a period of radical social and political turmoil in which the lower class demanded their inalienable rights, as well as their rights as citizens. This fever for change influenced the women of France to also take action and fight for their rights. One such woman was Olympe de Gouge, a French writer, who became famous during the French Revolution for her work *The Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen*. De Gouges began the Declaration with the statement, "Woman is born free and remains equal to man in her rights."⁷ Many historians recognize Olympe de Gouges as the founder of the French feminist movement since this article contributed to the foundation of future French feminist movements.

Olympe de Gouges was committed to women's rights and citizenship.⁸ De Gouges sought to accomplish social change by using her writing to influence public opinion.⁹ Therefore,

⁶ Hausmann, Ricardo, Laura D. Tyson, and Saadia Zahidi. *The Global Gender Gap Report 2010*. (Geneva, Switzerland: World Economic Forum, 2010), 8.

⁷ Lisa Beckstrand, *Deviant Women of the French Revolution and the Rise of Feminism* (New Jersey: Rosemont Publishing & Printing Corp., 2009), 91.

⁸ Beckstrand, 11.

when *La Déclaration des droits de l' homme et du citoyen* (*The Declaration of the Rights of Men and Citizen*), an essential document of the French Revolution was published, De Gouges responded by publishing *La Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne* (*The Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen*). In her declaration, de Gouges demanded that women be given full equality in all areas of civic life, such as full participation in education, government, employment, and the judicial system.¹⁰

De Gouges attempted to form a women's movement through the use of her writings by boldly crying out to her fellow female equals to rise up and assert their rights.¹¹ Unfortunately, despite de Gouges' attempts to advocate that French women be given the same rights as French men, she was unable to inspire a cohesive revolution amongst France's 18th century women. However, the first article of *Le Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne*, which states that "woman is born free and remains equal to man in her rights," is responsible for laying the foundation of the future feminists movements of the 1960s.¹²

The French Women's Movement

France's women's movement began after the uprisings of May 1968. An important outspoken defender for women's rights during this era was Simone de Beauvoir, whose writings inspired the creation of the women's movement.¹³ In her writings, de Beauvoir focuses on the reasons why it is difficult for a talented woman to become successful. The various obstacles that de Beauvoir identifies include, women's inability to make as much money as men within the same profession, women's domestic responsibilities, society's lack of support for women to

⁹ Ibid, 16.

¹⁰ Ibid, 17.

¹¹ Beckstrand, 75.

¹² Ibid, 91.

¹³ Toril Moi, ed., *French Feminist Thought: A Reader* (New York: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1987), 3.

succeed, and women's fear that being successful will either annoy their husband or prevent them from even finding a husband.¹⁴

De Beauvoir also focuses her attention on analyzing several root causes for why women lack the ambition to be successful. She argues that society hinders women's rate of success by encouraging girls to mimic their mother and obey their father, and by encouraging boys to excel and exceed the accomplishments of their father. De Beauvoir claims that "ambition is something which is encouraged in a male child, by virtue of the fact that he belongs to the superior caste,"¹⁵ which is why, 'by virtue of the fact that women belong to the inferior caste,' a vocation is not fostered in women.¹⁶ So by recognizing that society places women in a perpetual cycle that doesn't allow them to succeed, De Beauvoir chooses to combat this cycle by using her talent as a writer to advocate change.

After the uprising in May 1968, France's women's movement erupted full force in the form of *Le Mouvement de Libération des Femmes* (MLF) (The Women's Liberation Movement). The messages presented in Simone de Beauvoir's work inspired the creation of the MLF to turn de Beauvoir's ideas into actions. The MLF was responsible for taking action and bringing about change to women's rights and equality. Some of the important contributors to the MLF were Simone de Beauvoir, Christiane Rochefort, Christine Delphy, and Anne Tristan. As a result of its actions, the MLF managed to force a few equal rights out of the male-dominated society, including the right to education, the right to work, and the right to vote. One of the most important issues of the female condition, addressed by the MLF, was the banning of abortion and contraception. The MLF was outraged by this ban, and saw it as a violation of women's rights.¹⁷

¹⁴ *Moi*, 19-20.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 25.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 25-27.

¹⁷ *Moi*, 64-65.

In an effort to combat this law, the MLF designed a declaration, known as Le Manifeste des 343, that was signed by 343 women admitting to having had an illegal abortion.

This Manifesto was published in *Le Nouvel Observateur* and *Le Monde*, two of the principal newspapers in France, on April 5, 1971.¹⁸ The creation and publication of this Manifesto was a momentous event for the women's movement because it was not only an aggressive act in defiance of the corrupt law that attempted to control women's bodies, but it also managed to attract a large amount of support from well known, respected individuals of the era. The Manifesto proved to be a success when women received the right to an abortion with the passing of the Veil Law in 1975. The MLF's aggressive actions during the 1970s not only brought about political change, but it also influenced a change in women's attitudes to be more confident and to make more demands, rather than accept their submission, because the MLF gave French women assurance in their ability to fight against their oppression.¹⁹

History of French Women's Education

France's women's movement also fought for women's right to education, so that they could learn how to read and write, and to understand the world they live in.²⁰ The French education system at the beginning of the 19th century separated boys and girls. French boys and girls had separate educations, which included separate schools, separate curriculums, and separate goals. Boys' education prepared them to serve the state, to be a leader and a successful worker, whereas girls' education prepared them for their role in the family as the homemaker, wife, mother, and educator of their children.²¹ In 1850, the state invested in girls' education via Le Loi Falloux, which established the girls' primary school known as *l'école des filles*.

¹⁸ Ibid, 48-50.

¹⁹ Ibid, 65-66.

²⁰ Dorothy McBride Stetson, *Women's Rights in France* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press Inc., 1987), 107.

²¹ Stetson, 108-109.

Unfortunately the purpose of girls' primary education was still to prepare them for their roles as mother and wife.²²

By 1880, Camille Sée had founded public secondary education for girls (high school level),²³ but when these girls graduated many were unable to receive the *baccalauréat* (a prize of secondary education in France), only a diploma that was less worthy than the "bac." This hindered French women's ability to compete for admission into the universities after they had begun enrolling women in the late 19th century. By 1900, 621 women managed to enroll in universities, yet many women were often unsuccessful in completing their course.²⁴ Separate sex schools continued into the 1970s, but were gradually becoming co-educational. Unfortunately, despite the reforms that increased women's participation in education, women were still expected to stop their formal education early and either work or play until they got married.²⁵

History of French Women's Participation in the Work Force

Traditionally, a woman's work was her duties within the domestic sphere, but beginning in the 1870s, women made up a significant portion of the work force in an effort to contribute economically to their families.²⁶ Although, once contraception was legalized and women had better access to an education, there was a large influx of women into the work force who were determined to become financially independent. As women began to enter the work force, they primarily occupied domestic jobs or were workers in factories. In both these occupations, French women were underpaid, exploited, and employed on physically demanding tasks.²⁷ Women in

²² Ibid, 111.

²³ Raynal, "Women, the Champions in Education."

²⁴ Stetson, 112-113.

²⁵ Ibid, 114-115.

²⁶ Stetson, 134.

²⁷ Emmanuel Thévenon, "Women at Work, an Inexorable Rise," *Label France* 37 (1999), http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/france_159/label-france_2554/label-france-issues_2555/label-france-no.-37_4205/feature-women-in-france-today_4298/women-at-work-an-inexorable-rise_6616.html (accessed Oct. 4, 2010).

the work force experienced discrimination and inequality in areas such as, pay responsibilities, unemployment, and job security.²⁸ Accordingly, because feminists view paid work as an essential key to women's liberation, French women workers demanded that the government put an end to the discrimination and provide them with equal opportunities.²⁹

At first many politicians tried to prevent women from entering the work force, because of the traditional logic of separate sex roles, but around 1977, some Left-wing parties, like the Communist party, began to shift their views towards the notion that both women and men should share family responsibilities. In 1978, the Communist Party declared that women had the right to work, and, thus, developed effective equal pay laws and introduced job training and promotion for women.³⁰ Shortly after, in July 1983, *le Loi Roudy* was passed which stated that women and men have equal access to employment, including promotion, and to vocational training.³¹ The *Loi Roudy* was later extended to include the definition of sexual harassment and an employer's responsibility with regard to sexual harassment.³² As a result of the government's effort to provide women with equal opportunities, public employment became a major source of employment for women. About 48 percent of public employees were women in professions, such as, teaching, social services, and health care.³³ By the end of the 1980s, the female employment rate increased to the highest point of the century, and was followed by a long period of growth in female employment.³⁴

History of French Women's Participation in Politics

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Stetson, 130-131.

³⁰ Ibid, 133-134.

³¹ Ibid, 145-147.

³² Ibid, 149.

³³ Stetson, 151.

³⁴ Thévenon, "Women at Work, an Inexorable Rise."

French women's fight for their political rights grew out of the tumultuous, politically stimulated French Revolution. As the lower class took up arms against the monarchy and the aristocracy for their political rights as citizens of France, the women of France also took up arms and became politically involved. The first club to advocate women's civil rights was the Club des Citoyennes Républicaine Révolutionnaires, established in 1789.³⁵ The French Revolution inspired many women to take up arms in an effort to fight for their rights. Unfortunately, because of France's political instability that followed the French Revolution, women's political rights were constantly changing with each regime change.

After the French Revolution, the National Convention put an end to the political rights and revolutionary reforms women achieved during the Revolution. Following the banning of women's political involvement was the Napoleonic Code, which required that women remain in the home and obey their husbands.³⁶ In 1848, the Second Republic gave women more freedom, which led to the development of feminist clubs and newspapers. But once the Second Empire took control, these new freedoms were immediately taken away. After the establishment of the Third Republic, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and freedom of speech were introduced. Feminists were once again able to publish newspapers and organize campaigns for women's political rights.³⁷

The demand for women's right to vote increased between 1900 and 1910, but was faced with opposition by the traditional notions that politics was a man's work and that women were not competent enough, nor intelligent enough, to have a voice in politics. Women finally received the right to vote in 1944, after their efforts and sufferings of World War II, by the new constitution of the new Provisional Government that formally recognized the equal political

³⁵ Stetson, 28-29.

³⁶ Ibid, 29-30

³⁷ Stetson, 31-32.

status of men and women.³⁸ Shortly after receiving the right to vote, women held 38 of the 542 seats in the National Assembly.³⁹ By 1978, the percentage of women running in national parliamentary elections was 15.9%, as oppose to 3.3% in 1968.⁴⁰ While French women have made progress in their participation in politics, the percentage of women's representation in the politics will remain small as long as French women continue to have limited opportunities to education and professions that can lead to political power.⁴¹

Traditional Notion of French Women in Society

The traditional notion of women in French society is that women are inferior, weak, and unintelligent, and that their responsibilities lie in the domestic sphere. Throughout history, women have been regarded as property and under the control their father, then after marriage, their husband. Women were deprived of basic rights and faced many inequalities. Society supported the oppression of women by using medical and philosophical theories as justification. Medical theories that aimed to justify women's oppression focused on the female body as the basis of women's intellectual inferiorities.⁴² The differences of the female body in relation to the male body were used to justify women as an imperfect version of men that were intellectually inferior and only suitable for a maternal role.⁴³

During the 18th century, French society believed the "natural" characteristics of women were duty, dependency, modesty, and maternal nature, and that French women should always be virtuous, adorable, and ignorant.⁴⁴ These traditional notions about women's characteristics and behavior continued to penetrate society into the 20th century. Anne Tristan, an essential member

³⁸ Ibid, 35-36.

³⁹ Ibid, 43.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 42.

⁴¹ Stetson, 43.

⁴² Beckstrand, 11.

⁴³ Ibid, 24.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 23.

of the *Mouvement de Libération des Femmes*, defines the traditional view of a female in French society:

“[a female is] a human being designed primarily for reproductive purposes, fashioned so as to attract the man whom she will marry in order to carry out this task, take charge of the home and the children with or without assistance, appear infrequently in so-called public life and, in short, appear as a dependent being whose desires have been exclusively oriented towards a single goal: marriage and children”⁴⁵

Tristan’s description of a female embodies France’s patriarchal belief about women. This traditional belief has influenced society’s treatment of French women throughout history.

The following chapters develop women’s participation in each of these aspects of French society and conclude with recommendations for bringing true equality between men and women in France.

⁴⁵ Moi, 64-65.

Chapter 1

Women in France experience the highest level of equality in the education sector of French society. According to the 2010 Gender Gap Report, French women experience equal status to men with regards to literacy rate, enrollment in primary education, enrollment in secondary education, and enrollment in tertiary education.⁴⁶ Research conducted by the European Union also supports the notion that the educational attainment level of French women is equal, if not higher, to that of French men. Unfortunately, despite women's advancements in educational attainment, they still encounter inequalities within the education sector. In this chapter I will first outline France's educational system, then I will discuss the inequalities young French females face in the lower educational system, and then I will conclude with a discussion about French women's current participation in higher education.

The French educational system is broken down into three levels of education: primary, secondary, and tertiary. Primary education is compulsory, free of charge, and begins at age six. Children attend primary school from ages 6 to 11 and are taught basic skills and citizenship.⁴⁷ Secondary education is comprised of two cycles: single collège and general or technological lycée. Children attend the first cycle, single collège, from ages 11 to 15 and are equipped with minimum knowledge and rules of life in society.⁴⁸ The same education is taught in all single collèges in an effort to reduce inequalities among students. The second cycle, which is either a general lycée or a technical lycée, is for students ages 15 to 18. During the second cycle, students prepare for the either the general baccalauréat, which includes literature, science, economics, and

⁴⁶ Ricardo Hausmann, Laura D. Tyson, and Saadia Zahidi, *The Global Gender Gap Report 2010* (Geneva, Switzerland: World Economic Forum, 2010), 138.

⁴⁷ France-Diplomatie, "Organization of education system," French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/france_159/studying-in-france_2192/presentation_1988/main-features_5350/index.html (accessed Oct. 19, 2010).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

social options, or the technological baccalauréat, which includes science and industrial technologies, science and laboratory technologies and medical and social sciences options.⁴⁹

Over 50% of students in the second cycle prepare for either the bac techniques or the bac professionnels.⁵⁰

Tertiary education is a higher education in which students attend universities to complete this level of education. Over 60 percent of students who finish secondary education go on to tertiary education. Tertiary education is comprised of two stages: the first stage is equivalent to an undergraduate education, and the second stage is equivalent to a graduate education. The first stage of tertiary education offers programs with an academic orientation that are theoretically based, and programs with an occupation orientation that are geared for entry into the labor market.⁵¹ The second stage of tertiary education offer programs that lead to an advanced research qualification, such as a Ph.D. or a doctorate.⁵²

Education is so highly valued in French society that the French government dedicates about 7 percent of its GDP to national education expenditure, making France one of the top OECD* countries who contribute a significant amount of national support to education. The educational system in France was developed with the intention of teaching the French people how to exercise their citizenship. Since the French highly view education, they made school compulsory starting at age six so as to begin enlightening citizenship amongst the French people

⁴⁹ France-Diplomatie, "Organization of education system," French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/france_159/studying-in-france_2192/presentation_1988/main-features_5350/index.html (accessed Oct. 19, 2010).

*Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, "International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 1997," http://www.unesco.org/education/information/nfsunesco/doc/isced_1997.htm (accessed Sept. 20, 2010).

⁵² Ibid.

at an early age.⁵³ Accordingly, the French view schools and an education as being essential to the development of the French nation.⁵⁴

As identified earlier, French women have the best status of equality within the education sector in French society. But French women still encounter inequalities that tend to shape their behavior as well as influence the decisions they make in the future. The two major factors that reinforce inequalities in primary and secondary education are the behavior of teachers, and the material presented in textbooks. Primary and secondary school teachers tend to unintentionally or unconsciously reinforce through their behavior many of societies gender stereotypes and inequalities.⁵⁵ For example, these teachers tend to give more attention and interact more with the boys than the girls. When teachers behave this way they are encouraging the boys to be assertive and confident, while sending the message to the girls that they are less valued than the boys.⁵⁶ If the teacher calls on boys more often than girls, then these girls will start to avoid speaking out in class and begin to act intellectually inferior. Eventually, young girls lose their confidence and their motivation to succeed. Consequently, teachers' behaviors are conditioning young girls to believe that their whether they succeed or not is unimportant, and conditioning young boys to be confident and strive for success.⁵⁷

⁵³ France-Diplomatie, "The values of the French school system," French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/france_159/studying-in-france_2192/presentation_1988/main-features_5350/the-values-of-the-french-school-system_8387.html (accessed Oct. 19, 2010).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Emmanuelle Chevallereau, "La construction identitaire des jeunes enfants est un element-clé de la lute contre les inégalités de sexe (The construction of identity of young children is a key element in the fight against gender inequalities)," *LeMonde.fr*, October 8, 2010, http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2010/10/08/la-construction-identitaire-des-jeunes-enfants-est-un-element-cle-de-la-lutte-contre-les-inegalites-de-sexe_1422169_3224.html (accessed Oct. 19, 2010).

⁵⁶ Florence Raynal, "Women, the Champions in Education," *Label France* 37 (1999), http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/france_159/label-france_2554/label-france-issues_2555/label-france-no.-37_4205/feature-women-in-france-today_4298/women-the-champions-in-education_6615.html (accessed Oct. 3, 2010).

⁵⁷ Raynal, "Women, the Champions in Education."

The second factor that reinforces gender inequalities in the educational sector is the material presented in textbooks. School textbooks have been identified as playing a significant role in reinforcing gender stereotypes. For example, textbooks rarely feature women participating in economic life or in the history of the country, indicating that women are unimportant and absent in history.⁵⁸ Another example is that the subjects featured in textbooks are often connected to a specific sex, meaning that many subjects, such as mathematics, physics, and technology, are reinforced as being traditionally male fields of study.⁵⁹ As a result, students tend to categorize subjects as either being “masculine” or “feminine,” which contributes to reinforcing societal gender stereotypes. Teachers need to be aware of the impact subjects in textbooks can have on French children’s developing identities.

Despite these inequalities that young French females encounter in their early education, French women are able to experience equal access to higher education. In fact, French women have consistently had a higher level of participation in tertiary education than men since 1998. In 1998, the percentage of women among the total students in ISCED* level 5-6 was 54.7 percent, and now, in 2010, the percentage of women among the total students in ISCED level 5-6 is 61 percent.⁶⁰ The percentage of French males and females enrolled in tertiary education are presented in Table 1. Table 1 demonstrates French women’s consistent trend of higher participation in tertiary education than French men. As a result of French women’s increased participation in higher education, more women are leaving the school system with more qualifications than men.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Toril, Moi, ed, *French Feminist Thought: A Reader*, New York: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1987: 135.

⁵⁹ Raynal, “Women, the Champions in Education.”

*The International Standard Classification of Education (level 5-6 are first and second stage of tertiary education)

⁶⁰ Appendix A, Table 1.

⁶¹ Dominique Méda, “Women and Work,” *Embassy of France in Washington*, <http://ambafrance-us.org/spip.php?article560> (accessed Oct. 4, 2010).

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Female	63%	63%	63%	62%	61%
Male	49%	49%	50%	49%	48%

Table 1. Hausmann, Ricardo, Laura D. Tyson, and Saadia Zahidi. *The Global Gender Gap Report 2010*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Economic Forum, 2010: 139.

More women than men have been graduating from ISCED level 5 and 6 since 1998. In 1998 there were 275,786 female graduates and 221,402 male graduates, compared to 343,198 female graduates and 278,246 male graduates in 2008.⁶² Although, amongst these graduates, there is a distinct gap female science and technology graduates and male science and technology graduates. For instance, in 1998, only 11,600 females graduated in mathematics, science and technology, whereas 25,400 males graduated in mathematics, science and technology. By 2008, the numbers for females had declined to 11,400 female graduates in mathematics, science and technology, and the numbers for males had increased to 28,900 male graduates in mathematics, science, and technology.⁶³

This gap between female and male graduates in science and technology is an indicator that young French children are influenced in their early education to adhere to societal stereotypes about female appropriate occupations. Beginning early on, as a result of the educational guidance they receive, young French girls develop a process of categorizing jobs into occupations that are considered traditionally female such as caring professions, education, and service industries.⁶⁴ These young girls are then encouraged by their teachers, peers, and family to pursue these kinds of occupations, which are typically not the highest paying jobs.⁶⁵ For example, in 2006, the percentage of women with education and training in traditionally female occupations was, 73.4 percent in education, 71.7 percent in humanities and arts, 71.7 percent in

⁶² Appendix A, Table 2.

⁶³ Appendix A, Table 3.

⁶⁴ Raynal, "Women, the Champions in Education."

⁶⁵ Gérard, "Retraites: 'Il y a une tolérance sociale à l'égard des femmes les plus fragiles' (Pensions: 'There is a social tolerance against women most vulnerable')."

health and welfare, and 48.7 percent in services.⁶⁶ The percentage of women, in 2006, with education and training in traditionally male occupations was significantly lower, with only 35.9 percent in science, mathematics and computing, 21.9 percent in engineering, manufacturing and construction, and 38.3 percent in agriculture and veterinary science.⁶⁷ The only exception to this trend was the percentage of women with education and training in social sciences, business and law, which are traditionally considered male occupations, was 63.2 percent in 2006.⁶⁸

Since French women seem to be pursuing traditionally female occupations after they graduate, France's education system needs to recognize that something should be done to stop the concept of gendered occupations. France should consider expanding its women's studies program in universities.⁶⁹ A gender studies program can be defined as seeking to understand gender differences and the difference between gender as a social construction, meaning constructed by society, the cultural environment, and other things rooted in history between the sexes.⁷⁰ Many researchers believe that introducing gender studies programs into universities' curriculum could help reduce the gendering of occupations among young French adolescents.

An education is an important, fundamental tool for an individual's future success. Fortunately, French women not only experience equal access to higher education, but they also outnumber French men in higher education. In fact, about 87 percent of the French people believe a university education is equally as important for French females as it is for French

⁶⁶ Graduates and Qualification Levels: Figure F8, *Key Data on Education in Europe 2009*, European Commission. Brussels: Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 2009: 251.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Dorothy McBride Stetson, *Women's Rights in France*, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1987: 108.

⁷⁰ Chevallereau, "La construction identitaire des jeunes enfants est un élément-clé de la lutte contre les inégalités de sexe (The construction of identity of young children is a key element in the fight against gender inequalities)."

males.⁷¹ Sadly, the high percentage of French women graduating from higher education does not correlate with the percentage of French women in high-level positions. French women appear to study hard and graduate with more qualifications than men, but then, most of the time, nothing comes out of this success. There is a fundamental problem in France if it continues to have more female graduates of tertiary education than male graduates, and yet, more male business executives and political representatives than female. Therefore, France should make some changes in both the education system as well as in the types of opportunities presented to French women when they graduate, in order for French women to feel that society values their higher education and French men's higher education equally.

⁷¹ Pew Global Attitudes Project. *Gender Equality Universally Embraced, But Inequalities Acknowledged*. Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2010. <http://pewglobal.org/2010/07/01/gender-equality/> (accessed Nov. 12, 2010).

Chapter Two

France has made progress in the education sector of society by increasing women's access to education, so that now there are more bright, educated young women graduating from college than young men. This change should have led to female workers receiving the same status as male workers with the same education level, but unfortunately this is not the case. The amount of women graduating from tertiary and post-tertiary education does not correlate with the number of women in high-level positions in the work force. Instead, there is an over representation of women in low paying jobs.⁷² This gap indicates that French women suffer from gender inequality in the work force. In this chapter, I am first going to discuss these various inequalities, then I will discuss the reasons these inequalities exist, and then I will end the chapter by discussing ineffective attempts to solve these inequalities.

In France there are about 21 million women between the ages of 15 and 64, eight-two percent of these women have jobs, and yet only one of France's top companies is run by a woman.⁷³ Within France's work force, there is an obvious separation between jobs that are occupied by women and jobs occupied by men. The positions that females primarily occupy are in civil or local government services, in companies and shops as staff providing services to individuals, in the educational system, and in professions that are supplementary to medicine, such as nurses, radiographers, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, etc.⁷⁴ On the other hand, the positions that are generally occupied by males are as legislators, senior officials and managers, as skilled agriculture and fishery workers, as craft and related trade workers, as plant

⁷² Dominique Méda, "Women and Work," *Embassy of France in Washington*, <http://ambafrance-us.org/spip.php?article560> (accessed Oct. 4, 2010).

⁷³ Katrin Bennhold, "Where Having It All Doesn't Mean Having Equality," *New York Times*, October 11, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/12/world/europe/12iht-fffrance.html?_r=2&pagewanted=print (accessed October 12, 2010).

⁷⁴ Méda, "Women and Work."

and machine operators and assemblers, and in the armed forces. Statistical data provides evidence that occupations are gendered, because, as of 2010, women account for about 73 percent of service workers and shop and market sales workers, 75 percent of clerks, and 70 percent of elementary occupations.⁷⁵ Whereas, men account for about 65 percent of legislators, senior officials and manager, 75 percent of skilled agricultural and fishery workers, 90 percent of craft and related trade workers, 80 percent of plant and machine operators and assemblers, and 90 percent of the armed forces.⁷⁶ This has been a consistent trend in France's work force since 2003.⁷⁷ This trend is often attributed to the career guidance women receive in school, or to the process of categorizing industries as either female or male that is often unconsciously reinforced amongst younger children.

Another major inequality in the French work force is the amount of women in part-time work versus full time work. As of 2009, about 29.8 percent of French women (out of total employment) are employed part-time, while only about 6.0 percent of French men are employed part-time. This is a drastic difference between men and women, and yet it is considered progress for France, because in 1999, the percentage of women employed part-time was 31.4 percent, while the percentage of men employed part-time was 5.5 percent.⁷⁸ An opinion poll taken of women who work part-time demonstrated that most of the women who work part-time want to work full time, but are unable to because of the lack of full time opportunities for women. The

⁷⁵ Eurostat. "Employment by sex, age groups, professional status and occupation." *European Commission*, 2010. Under "Employment-LFS series," http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/employment_unemployment_ifs/data/database (accessed Oct. 17, 2010)

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Appendix B, Table 1.

⁷⁸ Appendix B, Table 2.

employment opportunities that are available for women tend to be fixed term contracts, temporary work, traineeships, and assisted contracts.⁷⁹

Another factor that makes women's employment experience even more unjust is the fact that the French government does not view part-time work as being a full career. Therefore, according to the ministry of economy, finance, and industry, only about 44 percent of female workers have a validated 'full career' compared to about 86 percent of male workers.⁸⁰ Since a career working part-time is not considered a 'full career,' French women earn on average about 25 percent less than men and receive lower pensions. These penalties placed upon part-time workers contribute to lowering the status of women in French society and depriving them of pension benefits they both need and deserve.

This existence of the "glass ceiling" is indicative of another inequality French women face in the work force. As a result of this invisible barrier in corporate hierarchies, French women are unable to raise their occupational status in the work force. French women frequently remain in jobs with the lowest status, whereas men tend to increase their occupational status overtime. For example, as of 2010, the number of French female employers is about 247,500, whereas the number of male employers is about 873,000.⁸¹ The number of female employers has actually decreased overtime, whereas the number of male employers has increased greatly. This observation is evident in the statistical data presented in 2003, which showed that there were about 249,800 female employers and about 831,400 male employers.⁸² These numbers indicate that French women's promotion prospects are obviously not the same as men. In fact, research

⁷⁹ Méda, "Women and Work."

⁸⁰ Gérard, Mathilde. "Retraites: 'Il y a une tolérance sociale à l'égard des femmes les plus fragiles' (Pensions: 'There is a social tolerance against women most vulnerable')." *LeMonde.fr*, October 06, 2010. http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2010/10/06/retraites-il-y-a-une-tolerance-sociale-a-l-egard-des-femmes-les-plus-fragiles_1420940_823448.html (accessed Oct. 21, 2010).

⁸¹ Appendix B, Table 3.

⁸² Appendix B, Table 3.

shows that after ten years in a career, men have a 17 percent chance of being promoted to a managerial position, while women only have an 8 percent chance, even though they both have the same qualifications.⁸³ This gap in French women's opportunity to advance their position in a company suggests that the gender gap is still very present in the French work force. Further evidence that is indicative of this gender gap is the fact that out of the top 5,000 French companies, only 7 percent of the top executives are women.⁸⁴ This absence of women amongst senior executives and company board members does not reflect what would be expected of women with such high academic achievements.⁸⁵ The Global Gender Gap Report of 2010 also recognized this inequality, and reported that on a scale from 1-to-7, with 1 being the worse score and 7 being the best score, France received a 3.54 in terms of French women's ability to rise to positions of enterprise leadership.⁸⁶

Unemployment rate, a growing problem in contemporary society, is another inequality women are forced to battle in the work force. Currently the unemployment rate for females is 8.0 percent, while the unemployment rate for males is 7.0 percent.⁸⁷ The higher unemployment among women has been a trend throughout France's history, and the difference between the unemployment rates was actually worse in 1999, with females having an unemployment rate of about 12.1 percent, while males had an unemployment rate of about 8.9 percent.⁸⁸ The unemployment rate indicates that women take the hardest hit during tough economic times, and yet, surprisingly, about 80 percent of the French population disagree that men should receive

⁸³ Méda, "Women and Work."

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ricardo Hausmann, Laura D. Tyson, and Saadia Zahidi, *The Global Gender Gap Report 2010*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Economic Forum, 2010: 13

⁸⁷ Appendix B, Table 4.

⁸⁸ Appendix B, Table 4.

preferential treatment in tough economic times.⁸⁹ The higher unemployment rate amongst women is also indicates that French women tend to hold jobs that are not highly valued in the work force, so that when the economy takes a hit, women's jobs tend to be the first to go.

The wage gap, French women argue, is the most significant inequality French women face in the work force, because the only explanation for the gap is the difference in sexes. In the Global Gap Report 2010, France was ranked 127 out of 137 countries for wage equality for similar work, meaning that French women's wage rate is significant lower than French men's wage rate for equal, or comparable, work.⁹⁰ For professions of equal value or at an equal level, the pay gap between French men and women is about 7 percent, indicating that this residual gap in pay is because of differences in sex alone.⁹¹

The head of the research unit in the Research and Statistical Information Directorate of the Ministry for Employment and Solidarity, Dominique Méda, argues that "at every level of academic qualification, men are paid more than women, [and that] if pay depended only on academic qualifications, women would on average be better paid than men."⁹² As of 2010, French women earn on average an income of \$25,677, whereas men earn on average an income of \$40,000. This difference of \$15,000 between men and women's income has been a trend since 2006, during which women earned on average an income of \$20,642, and men earned on average an income of \$35,123.⁹³ Consequently, French women tend to earn on average about 25 percent less than men, which can arguably be attributed to the fact that a large percentage of French women are part-time workers or workers in low-paid sectors of the work force. The wage gap

⁸⁹ Pew Global Attitudes Project. *Gender Equality Universally Embraced, But Inequalities Acknowledged*. Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2010. <http://pewglobal.org/2010/07/01/gender-equality/> (accessed Nov. 12, 2010).

⁹⁰ Hausmann, 138.

⁹¹ Méda, "Women and Work."

⁹² Méda, "Women and Work."

⁹³ Hausmann, 139.

also hinders French women's ability to receive decent pensions for retirement, because differences in wages are influential in determining the spread of pensions for retirement. As a result of the wage difference, French women on average receive about 38 percent less retirement pensions than men.⁹⁴ The wage gap is a glaring injustice to French women that not only deprives them of the equal earnings they deserve, but also of the equal retirement pensions they deserve as well.

There are several main reasons that explain the current situation of women in France and why French women are forced to face these inequalities in the work force. The first reason is the traditional 'patriarchal corporate culture.' Brigitte Grésy, author of the 2009 report on gender equality in the workplace, claims that the 'patriarchal corporate culture' is one of the main barriers women in French companies face.⁹⁵ French women have a difficult time increasing their status within a French company because of the traditional notion of men being at the top of the company's hierarchy. This patriarchal belief has been rooted in French society for centuries and is preventing women from being able to raise their status within a company. Professor Herminia Ibarra, of organizational behavior at the international business school in Fontainebleau, comments on this barrier that women face by arguing that "there are still very few women running large organizations, and business culture remains resolutely a boys' club."⁹⁶ The patriarchal corporate culture also prevents female entrepreneurs from being able to access networks that are linked to capital and other crucial resources that male entrepreneurs are able to

⁹⁴ Gérard, "Retraites: 'Il y a une tolérance sociale à l'égard des femmes les plus fragiles' (Pensions: 'There is a social tolerance against women most vulnerable')."

⁹⁵ Bennhold, "Where Having It All Doesn't Mean Having Equality."

⁹⁶ Shannon, Victoria. "Equal Rights for Women? Survey Says: Yes, but..." *The New York Times*, July 1, 2010. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/01/world/01iht-poll.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=equal%20rights%20for%20women&st=cse (accessed Oct. 21, 2010).

access.⁹⁷ This lack of access to important resources also contributes to keeping women in a low status position within a company.

Jobs that are considered to be traditionally female, which are usually dominated by French women, have different social and financial value in French society than jobs that are traditionally masculine.⁹⁸ Unfortunately the female-dominated jobs tend to be less valued by French society, than male-dominated jobs. The French government reinforces the devaluing of female-dominated jobs by granting early retirement to jobs that are considered ‘hard work and physically straining.’ Early retirement is, therefore, usually granted to jobs in the industrial industry, which is mostly made up of men, and not to industries where women are also straining their bodies, such as the stress in call centers, or musculoskeletal disorders experienced by many cashiers.⁹⁹ The government is supporting the traditional, patriarchal belief that only men perform strenuous, labor-intensive work, but this is simply not the case in contemporary France. The act of gendering occupations, companies, and industries further restrains women from breaking out of the traditional mold of women’s status in the work force.

An essential reason behind French women’s inability to achieve a status of equality in the work force is because of their responsibility for household and family tasks, which for working women is considered the double shift. French women are solely responsible for managing the household, raising the children, and feeding the family. As a result, women spend on average about five hours and 1 minute per day on childcare and domestic tasks, while men only spend on

⁹⁷ Adriana Gardella, “Notes From the Women’s Forum,” *The New York Times*, October 21, 2010, <http://boss.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/10/21/notes-from-the-womens-forum/?src=busIn&scp=1&sq=wOMEN%27S%20Forum%20in%20France&st=cse> (accessed Oct. 21, 2010).

⁹⁸ Gérard, “Retraites: ‘Il y a une tolérance sociale à l’égard des femmes les plus fragiles’ (Pensions: ‘There is a social tolerance against women most vulnerable’).”

⁹⁹ Gérard, “Retraites: ‘Il y a une tolérance sociale à l’égard des femmes les plus fragiles’ (Pensions: ‘There is a social tolerance against women most vulnerable’).”

average about two hours and seven minutes per day on childcare and domestic tasks.¹⁰⁰ In addition, as women have more children, the amount of time they spend at work decreases, while the amount of time men spend at work increases.¹⁰¹ Research shows that about 40 percent of French mothers experience a career change within a year of giving birth, whereas only about 6 percent of French fathers experience a career change.¹⁰² Since women often take a career break to care for their children, they are not considered to have had a “full career,” which results in them receiving fewer pensions than men.¹⁰³ So French women are not only earning about 26 percent less than men, but they are also spending twice as much time on domestic tasks than men.¹⁰⁴

The French government has attempted to solve the inequalities women face in the work force, but unfortunately, for the most part, their efforts have been unsuccessful. For instance, the government has tried to put an end to the wage gap through equal pay legislation. But four pieces of equal pay legislation have been passed since 1972, and yet women still earn about 17 percent less than men.¹⁰⁵ The most recent law on wage inequality was in March 2006, which required companies to remove the wage gap between men and women by December 2010, otherwise they would face financial penalties. Unfortunately, this law is relatively weak in its effectiveness to remove the wage gap, because the law only requires that companies develop a plan or agreement for professional equality by December 2010.¹⁰⁶ The government has also tried to provide French men with more opportunities to become more involved in domestic tasks and childcare by

¹⁰⁰ Bennhold, “Where Having It All Doesn’t Mean Having Equality.”

¹⁰¹ Méda, “Women and Work.”

¹⁰² Bennhold, “Where Having It All Doesn’t Mean Having Equality.”

¹⁰³ Gérard, “Retraites: ‘Il y a une tolérance sociale à l’égard des femmes les plus fragiles’ (Pensions: ‘There is a social tolerance against women most vulnerable’).”

¹⁰⁴ Bennhold, “Where Having It All Doesn’t Mean Having Equality.”

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Gérard, “Retraites: ‘Il y a une tolérance sociale à l’égard des femmes les plus fragiles’ (Pensions: ‘There is a social tolerance against women most vulnerable’).”

offering a paid paternity leave. But this effort proved to be ineffective, because about 97 percent of those who take a paid leave are women.¹⁰⁷ It is clear that the current laws and efforts to put an end to the wage gap, as well as to increase the status of women in the work force, are inadequate because the wage gap not only still exists, but it is also quite a large gap.

The current situation of French women in the work force demonstrates that the economic sector of French society is still largely dominated by patriarchal thought and behavior. As a result, French women suffer in a variety of ways, such as receiving lower retirement pensions, having to work a part-time job, having fewer promotions or opportunities for career advancement, and carrying the burden of family and household tasks. The government has also failed to provide any successful solutions thus far, which has left women in a position where their only access to a career is in a traditionally feminine occupation with low pay and inadequate benefits. France must, therefore, get its act together and figure out a solution that will bring change to women's current status in the economic realm of society.

¹⁰⁷Bennhold, "Where Having It All Doesn't Mean Having Equality."

Chapter Three

Women in France are faced with a variety of obstacles in different realms of society that contribute to their equality status with French men. French politics are particularly sexist and resistant to equilibrating the status of women. The current representation of women in French politics is incredibly low, not only for a developed country, but also in comparison to undeveloped countries throughout the world. France's overall political empowerment of women, is ranked 47th out of 134 countries by the Global Gap Report 2010, falling below less developed countries such as Mozambique at 11th, Uganda at 29th, and Tanzania at 33rd.¹⁰⁸ In the 2009 rankings, France ranked 16th in the political empowerment of women. France's dramatic drop in ranking indicates a significant gender disparity despite various changes in legislation.¹⁰⁹ In this chapter I will first uncover gender disparities evident among French politics, discuss reasons enabling these inequalities, and then conclude by discussing France's public opinion on the issue and the French government's attempts to address the growing inequality.

Women have certainly made progress in French politics, but in comparison to the progress made by the rest of the world, France remains incredibly far behind. The largest gender disparity appears in the number of female representatives in national parliament. Women currently represent about 19 percent of the members of parliament.¹¹⁰ French women's presence in both the *Assemblée nationale* and the *Senat* has increased, but in very small increments. Since 1997, women's presence in the *Assemblée nationale* increased by only 8 percent. The complete breakdown of the percentage of women in the *Assemblée nationale* and the *Senat* since 1997 is shown in Table 1 (the years in bold are election years).

¹⁰⁸ Hausmann, Ricardo, Laura D. Tyson, *The Global Gender Gap Report 2010* (Geneva, Switzerland: World Economic Forum, 2010), 18.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 25.

¹¹⁰ Appendix C, Table 1.

Lower or Single House					Upper House or Senate			
Year	Elections	Seats	Women	%W	Elections	Seats	Women	%W
2000	05-1997	577	63	10.9%	09-1998	321	19	5.9%
2001	05-1997	577	63	10.9%	09-2001	321	35	10.9%
2002	06-2002	577	70	12.1%	09-2001	321	35	10.9%
2003	06-2002	574	70	12.2%	09-2001	321	35	10.9%
2004	06-2002	574	70	12.2%	09-2004	331	56	16.9%
2005	06-2002	574	70	12.2%	09-2004	331	56	16.9%
2006	06-2002	574	70	12.2%	09-2004	331	56	16.9%
2007	06-2007	577	105	18.2%	09-2004	331	56	16.9%
2008	06-2007	577	105	18.2%	09-2008	342	79	23.1%
2009	06-2007	577	105	18.2%	09-2008	342	79	23.1%
2010	06-2007	577	109	18.9%	09-2008	342	79	23.1%

Table 1. Inter-Parliamentary Union. "Women in National Parliaments." Inter-Parliamentary Union. <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif-arc.htm> (accessed Oct. 30, 2010).

This information proves increasing level of representation in French politics, but compared to the rest of Europe and the rest of the world, France ranks 19th among the 25 member countries of the European Union in the percentage of female parliamentarians and 66th in the world in the percentage of female parliamentarians, indicating that French politics has a long way to go before the presence of women in national parliament has reached an acceptable level of representation.¹¹¹

French women are also greatly under-represented among ministerial positions. Although some senior ministerial positions are currently occupied by women, including the Minister of Health, Minister of Foreign Affairs/Minister of European Affairs, and Minister of Economic Affairs, Industry and Employment; the percentage of women occupying ministerial positions is only about 36 percent.¹¹² The percentage of women in ministerial positions has fluctuated over the years. For instance, in 2006, French women represented about 21 percent of the ministerial positions, while in 2008, French women represented about 88 percent of the ministerial positions, and then, in 2010, French women represented only about 36 percent of the ministerial

¹¹¹ Mariette Sineau, "The French Experience: Institutionalizing Parity," *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers* (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2005), 122.

¹¹² Appendix C, Table 3.

positions.¹¹³ In comparison to their representation of about 19 percent of the members of national parliament, French women appear to have a better level of representation amongst ministerial position. Unfortunately, the reason for more female ministers than female members of the national parliament is because appointing women as ministers is a way for the French government to bypass the strong resistance to women as representatives in the national parliament.¹¹⁴ However, even amongst ministerial positions, women still do not represent an equal portion of the ministers in the French government, which indicates that, even in the area where women are considered to have a high level of participation, they are still greatly under-represented.

As a developed, modern nation, one would think that the women in France experience a level of equality that women of less developed, third world countries could only dream of. But in reality, French women actually face more inequalities in politics than women in many less developed nations. In fact, many developing countries have reached more of a balance between male and female representation in politics than France.¹¹⁵ For instance, in 2002, the United Nations Development Fund for Women released a report that demonstrated that 13 developing countries in the sub-Saharan region, such as Rwanda, Uganda, and Mozambique, widely considered the poorest areas in the world, experienced higher percentages of female members of parliament than France. In 2002, the share of parliament seats held by women was 25.7 percent in Rwanda, 24.7 percent in Uganda, 30 percent in Mozambique, and only 11.8 percent in France.¹¹⁶ For many developing nations like Rwanda, Uganda, and Mozambique, the level of

¹¹³ Appendix C, Table 3.

¹¹⁴ Joan Wallach Scott, *Parité: Sexual Equality and the Crisis of French Universalism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 38.

¹¹⁵ Caroline Lambert, "French Women in Politics: The Long Road to Parity," The Brookings Institution. http://www.brookings.edu/articles/2001/05france_lambert.aspx (accessed Nov. 16, 2010).

¹¹⁶ "Rwanda moves to top women MP list," *BBC News*, October 22, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3204401.stm> (accessed Oct. 26, 2010).

women's representation in politics has continued to increase, and yet for a modern, developed nation like France, women continue to battle gender inequalities in French politics where their level of representation has stayed about the same, only increasing slightly.

As demonstrated, women are significantly under-represented in French politics, and there are a several reasons for these gender disparities. But the fundamental reason is attributed to the deeply rooted patriarchal notion that politics is a man's game that is unsuitable for women. The traditionalist attitude among political parties is greatly influential in keeping women out of politics. The author of the article "The French Experience: Institutionalizing Parity," Mariette Sineau, argues that a major problem in French politics is that political parties are "narrow-minded and ageing leadership, [that] have mainly operated as nomination groups that favour the self-reproduction of male elites."¹¹⁷ This group of male elites that run French politics is one of the essential barriers that keep French women out of politics. For example, when high-level civil servants are appointed to executive or legislative positions, they are usually from France's noteworthy educational institutions, such as the male dominated Ecole Nationale d'Administration, which perpetuates the tradition of male elites running French government services.¹¹⁸ This barrier in French politics was identified by a group of female politicians, who in 1996, announced to the public in a manifesto, that the reason females are unable to break into the realm of politics and obtain an equal status is because, "the function and fulfillment of representation have been captured by a ruling group, few in number, and extremely homogeneous, as a result of training in the *grandes ecoles* and by early inclusion in the senior branches of the civil services and ministerial cabinets."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Sineau, 123.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 123.

¹¹⁹ Scott, 52.

This tradition of recruiting civil servants from only the elite educational institutions in the country fosters a patriarchal, male elitist political institution that not only keeps women out of politics, but also creates a gap between civil society and the political system. Opinion polls in France indicate that the French people believe that women's absence in politics is the reason for the division between politics and civil society.¹²⁰ The French people are becoming more and more aware of the "boy's club" that runs French politics, and so they have begun to voice their support for incorporating more women into politics with the hopes of changing the traditional group of elite males that dominates politics.¹²¹ Subsequently, when the idea of *parité* was proposed as a remedy to the problem of equality between men and women, it was largely supported by people weary of the French political system's collusion and inaccessibility, who hoped that by incorporating more women in political positions would give broader disenfranchised groups a voice in politics.

The concept of *parité* was first introduced by the European Council in the late 1980s, and was eventually advocated by both men and women intellectuals in France in the early 1990s.¹²² The principle concept behind *parité* is equality of sexes, and a call to implement the concept in French law. *Parité* was introduced into French politics as a result of the inability to elect a sizeable presence of women and men to political offices.¹²³ In July 1999, a law was proposed incorporating equality between men and women into the constitution by requiring men and women to have equal access to electoral mandates and elective positions. This law, which became known as the *Parité Law*, was adopted into the French constitution in June 2000.¹²⁴ The *Parité* law required political parties to have 50 percent of each sex on their list of candidates, or

¹²⁰ Ibid, 49.

¹²¹ Sineau, 124.

¹²² Sineau, 124.

¹²³ Ibid, 122.

¹²⁴ Sineau, 125.

else face financial penalties. This law applies to elections for European Parliament, regional and Senate elections, and municipal elections.¹²⁵

After the Parité law was adopted, there were some improvements in women's representation in politics, but overall, the Parité law is proving to be ineffective. The Parité law was successful in bringing about change in assembly elections where the candidates are elected by proportional list voting. After 2001, the number of women on local councils in towns and cities of more than 3,500 inhabitants was 47.5 percent, which is almost double the amount before the law was imposed.¹²⁶ After the Parité law was adopted, political parties from the left-wing, such as the Parti Communiste, the Parti Socialiste, and Les Verts, incorporated a quota system in their party in an effort to include more women in its leadership.¹²⁷ The parties on the left-wing saw women as key contributors to French politics, because, as President Giscard said, women "could bring to our public life elements now lacking: greater realism, more prudence in arriving at judgments, a more accurate feel for realities of daily life."¹²⁸

Unfortunately, despite these few improvements, overall, the Parité law is proving to be very ineffective. The main problem with the Parité law is that the cost of compliance is not significant enough. The law places responsibility for incorporating women into politics to individual political parties. The Parité law gives political parties the option to either present 50 percent of their candidates from each sex, or suffer financial penalties.¹²⁹ As a result the trend amongst large political parties is to pay the fines and not comply with the constitutional amendment, instead of making a deliberate effort to incorporate women into their political

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid, 127.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 123.

¹²⁸ Scott, 38-39.

¹²⁹ Sineau, 128.

party.¹³⁰ This trend is particularly common amongst ring-wing parties who have ignored implementing a quota system into their regulations. Consequently, as long as political parties have the option of paying token fines in lieu of incorporating women in their political parties, they are going to continue to perpetuate traditional sexist attitudes in their nomination process with little impact on their considerable economic resources.¹³¹

France has passed four pieces of legislation in an attempt to increase women's participation in politics, and yet France has been ranked as 19th among the 25 member countries of the European Union in the percentage of women parliamentarians and 66th in the world in the percent of women parliamentarians.¹³² These rankings indicate that despite France's attempted efforts, like the Parité campaign, the problem of equal political representation has not been achieved. Women represent 52 percent of the voters in France, and yet their representation in the national parliament is less than a fourth of its members. As citizens, French women have the political right to have a voice and presence in the government. The French government must go beyond simply adopting a law that provides a means for equal access to electoral mandates and elective positions. Women's participation in French society in areas like the work force is increasing and will continue to increase. Hence, the French government needs to find a better solution for incorporating more women in politics, because, as the French people have voiced "a democracy without women [is] a disfigured democracy."¹³³

¹³⁰ Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Is Parliament Open to Women? An Appraisal, *Conference for Chairpersons and Members of Parliamentary Bodies Dealing with Gender Equality* (Geneva, Sept. 29-28, 2009) Doc. 62, 40.

¹³¹ Sineau, 129.

¹³² Ibid, 122.

¹³³ Sineau, 124.

Chapter 4

As of 2010, seventy-five percent of the French population view French men as having a better life than French women.¹³⁴ In July 2010, the Pew Research Center released a report, based on a 22-nation survey, demonstrated that gender equality is universally embraced, but that many inequalities persist.¹³⁵ The inequality uncovered by the report suggests gender discrimination may be a daily battle for French women.

French women are expected to live up to a specific image comprised of raising children, cooking, shopping and maintaining a home while appearing immaculate at all times. French women feel pressure to uphold this image on a daily basis not only from French men, but also from French women. The state however has made an effort to lessen the pressure to be ‘superwoman,’ but whether their efforts are effective is debatable. French women lack a sense of solidarity and sisterhood among each other, and commonly view one another with suspicion. In this chapter I will explore the personal side of women in French society and discuss the pressures women face on a daily basis in an effort to paint a picture of what the average women experiences in French society.

French women battle pressures to be perfect from both French men and women on a daily basis. A widely held stereotype about French women is that they are “slim, incredibly pretty, elegant, and sophisticated.”¹³⁶ French society expects French women to live up to this stereotype. French men in particular tend to demand their wife or girlfriend remain chic and attractive even when she is relaxing at home. Helena Firth Powell, the author of *All You Need to Be Impossibly French*, a novel about the lives of French women, had a discussion with one of her French male

¹³⁴ Pew Global Attitudes Project, *Gender Equality Universally Embraced, But Inequalities Acknowledged* (Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2010).

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Helena Firth Powell, *All You Need To Be Impossibly French*, Kindle Ed, (New York: Penguin Group, 2006): Chapter 1.

friends about women's style, and made a comment with regard to his expectations about his wife's style by saying, "when I come back home from work, I don't want my wife wearing an old tracksuit and no make-up."¹³⁷ This is a kind of pressure most French women experience from men.

French women, according to Helena Powell, are also the slimmest women in Europe, weighing on average 126 pounds.¹³⁸ Based on observation, women tend to eat very small portions, and only about twice a day in an effort to maintain this image of being slim. As for being elegant and chic, "French women have the whole of society dictating the way they dress, starting with their mothers and their cultural heritage."¹³⁹ Meaning that with regard to appearance, French women are raised not only by their mothers, but also by their culture.

French women are also expected to make extreme sacrifices in the family, such as giving up their career in order to raise children, or take a day off from work or leave early from work in order to take care of a sick child.¹⁴⁰ French men rarely take on these responsibilities; the burden overwhelmingly falls on women's shoulders. The pressure on French women to do it all takes such a major toll on them that they have become the largest consumer class of anti-depressants.¹⁴¹ As Valérie Toranian, editor-in-chief of *Elle* magazine puts it, "French women are exhausted [...] We have the right to do what men do – as long as we also take care of the children, cook a delicious dinner and look immaculate. We have to be superwoman."¹⁴² In fact, about 91 percent of the French population prefers an egalitarian marriage where both the husband and wives have jobs and take care of the house and children, rather than a situation in

¹³⁷ Powell, Chapter 1.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Céline Chataing, interviewed by author via email, Oct. 22, 2010.

¹⁴¹ Katrin Bennhold, "Where Having It All Doesn't Mean Having Equality," *New York Times*, Oct. 11, 2010 http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/18/business/global/18forum.html?_r=1&scp=2&sq=wOMEN%27S%20Forum%20in%20France&st=cse (accessed Oct. 21, 2010).

¹⁴² Bennhold, "Where Having It All Doesn't Mean Having Equality."

which the husband provides economic means while the wife cares for the household.¹⁴³ Yet, it is clear that marriages in France are not egalitarian, in fact there is a disproportionate amount of effort expected from women in comparison to men.

As demonstrated, French women carry a heavy load of responsibilities, which the government appears to have recognized by passing legislation that, in theory, should make having a job and a family manageable. The French government dedicates about 5 percent of its GDP each year to family, childcare, and maternity benefits.¹⁴⁴ The government provides family allowances, regardless of the parents' income. For example, families receive about \$170 a month for two children, \$375 a month for three children, and an additional \$210 for every child after the third child.¹⁴⁵ French legislation also requires employers to give women 4 to 6 weeks of a paid maternity leave and up to 3 years of an unpaid leave, all the while keeping their positions open in the company for them if they want to return.¹⁴⁶

The government made these changes in an effort to help French women manage both a career and family, but some outcomes have actually hurt women. For example, legislation passed enabling women's maternity leave has actually made hiring women less attractive to potential employers. With the new legislative requirements, employers see women as not only more expensive, but also as a potential dead end. This type of employment discrimination has become more prevalent in France after these new measures were adopted to 'help' women. According to a woman I worked with in Paris, when a French woman gets married in her thirties she is going

¹⁴³ Pew Global Attitudes Project, *Gender Equality Universally Embraced, But Inequalities Acknowledged*

¹⁴⁴ Bennhold, "Where Having It All Doesn't Mean Having Equality."

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Powell, Chapter 8.

to have an incredibly difficult time finding a job, because most employers assume she is likely to settle down and start a family in the next few years, so they choose not hire her.¹⁴⁷

The French government did manage to create something truly beneficial for women in the establishment of the childcare system.¹⁴⁸ France dedicates a large sum of money to make childcare available and free so that more women can work outside the home. Research shows that over half the children in France go to childcare anywhere between 1 and 29 hours a week.¹⁴⁹ But, regardless of the amount of time children spend in daycare, the point is that French women appear to be taking advantage of state financed childcare. So now that the state has given French women something they can benefit from, the state can focus on changing employer attitudes that women are poor investments.

Another challenge French women face is suspicious, jealous and competitive behavior from other French women.¹⁵⁰ A fundamental issue among French women is their inability to form solidarity or a sense of sisterhood with other French women. As Helena Powell puts it, “the dancing around the handbag syndrome seems to have bypassed the French female entirely.”¹⁵¹ Women in France don’t seem to have ‘girlfriends,’ like the kind of girlfriends American or British women have. French women simply just don’t go out with one another, or go out for drinks, or gossip with one another.¹⁵² The ‘girlie’ aspect of sisterhood or ‘girlfriends’ seems to be absent in French women’s relationships with other French women. Instead, French women tend to be threatened by their friends and suspicious that their friends will steal their husbands. They are often in competition with each other over who’s the most successful, thinnest, or most

¹⁴⁷ Céline Chataing, interviewed by author via email, Oct. 22, 2010.

¹⁴⁸ Powell, Chapter 8.

¹⁴⁹ Appendix D, Table 1.

¹⁵⁰ Powell, Chapter 7.

¹⁵¹ Powell, Chapter 7.

¹⁵² Ibid.

beautiful. French women are always checking each other out to see what they are wearing, what their shoes look like, and designer of their handbag.¹⁵³ With this kind of an attitude, French women are incapable of forming solidarity with each other.

This inability of French women to stick together and support one another is a major obstacle in their quest to achieve equality, after all, if women are going to exploit one another then what's to stop men from doing the same thing? French women need to be able to band together and support each other in order to truly raise the issue of gender inequality. If women do not come together and stand up for each other, then no one will. Since French women do not view each other as allies, then they must turn to men for support and guidance, and this kind of behavior only perpetuates male dominance over French women.

French women are constantly battling sexism in other areas of French society, particularly in the work force and in politics. French women in high-level positions, in either a company or in politics, are almost always accused of sleeping their way to the top.¹⁵⁴ This is a prominent form of sexism in French society. As Sophie Tellier, the former Miss France, puts it, "it doesn't matter what job a woman is in, if she gets anywhere she has automatically slept with someone,' [...] Luckily I had studied law before I won Miss France, otherwise I would have been viewed as just a bimbo."¹⁵⁵ This kind of attitude towards women is widely held among French people and is a fight many successful women have had to combat. For example, when Edith Cresson became the first female Prime Minister, rumors began to circulate claiming the only reason she was made Prime Minister under President Mitterand was because she had an affair with him.¹⁵⁶ This rumor was clearly false, but it indicates the kind of sexist attitude many

¹⁵³ Powell, Chapter 7.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, Chapter 8.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

French women have to face when they enter high-level position. This blatant sexism is frustrating for women who are trying to advance their careers; it is a heavy, unnecessary burden. Consequently, this sexist attitude has caused many French women to work twice as hard to prove themselves as being hard-working, successful individuals, and not the sexual beings French society seem to view them as.¹⁵⁷

Though, an interesting quality that is characteristic of most French women is their level of intellect. In France it is essential, equally among men and women, to be intellectual and knowledgeable.¹⁵⁸ French women view “intelligence and knowledge as another accessory to complete [their] look and image.”¹⁵⁹ The French place a high value on culture and make an effort to attend a cultural event almost once a week. This type of attitude among French men and women begins in their years of early education. Philosophy is compulsory in the French school system, which allows French kids to develop an intellectual advantage at a young age.¹⁶⁰ This aspect of French culture is truly fascinating, because French men claim, “a woman is sexy only if she is intelligent,”¹⁶¹ and yet in places like the work force or politics, women are suddenly not intellectual enough, or capable enough to hold a high-level position. This kind of contradictory behavior among French men seems to be relatively prevalent throughout French society.

French women seem to experience a variety of inequalities in their social lives, ranging from pressures from their partners to look a certain way, to having to bear the burden of a career and managing a household, to competing with other women, to being accused of sleeping their way to the top. It is obvious women are not equal in comparison to men, and yet a common

¹⁵⁷ Powell, Chapter 8.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, Chapter 11.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

saying in France is, “vous avez voulu l’égalité, eh bien vous l’avez, demerdez-vous...,”¹⁶² which effectively says “you wanted equality, well you have it, sort this out yourselves.” This saying is a clear indication that the French are falling short of making a full effort to solve the issue of inequality between men and women leaving most of the responsibility to French women. Ironically, according to the Pew Research Center survey, 99 percent of the French population, split evenly between French men and women, share the opinion that women should have equal rights.¹⁶³ Unfortunately this opinion doesn’t appear to correlate with the treatment of women in France’s social and familial culture.

¹⁶² Céline Chataing, interviewed by author via email, Oct. 22, 2010.

¹⁶³ Pew Global Attitudes Project, *Gender Equality Universally Embraced, But Inequalities Acknowledged*.

Conclusion

As a powerful, wealthy, and developed nation in the year 2010, France is still faced with the serious issue of gender inequality. France is not only far behind in comparison to the rest of Europe on the issue of gender equality, but France is also seriously behind in comparison to the rest of the world. France's ranking in the Global Gap Report 2010 fell to 46th place from 18th place in 2009, a loss of 28 places.¹⁶⁴ This drop is mainly attributed to France's poor performance of women's political empowerment, but gender inequalities are also extremely prevalent in other areas of French society. Some efforts have been made by the state with the intention of solving France's glaring problem with gender equality, but unfortunately most of these efforts have proved to be ineffective. I will, therefore, be using this final chapter to present other solutions, both tangible and intangible, that have the potential to change the current situation and establish a true level of equality between French men and women.

Education

French women experience the most equality in the French education system. French women continue to outnumber the amount of French men enrolled in tertiary education by about 13 percent.¹⁶⁵ This is a great step towards achieving gender equality, because an education is the foundation of one's ability to develop as an intellectual being and succeed. Unfortunately there is a major gap between the number of women who graduate from both tertiary and post-tertiary education and the number of women who are in high-level, leadership positions in both the work force and in politics. There are many reasons behind this gap, and some of them can be attributed to the behavior of teachers, presence of gender stereotypes in textbooks, and a lack of an

¹⁶⁴ Hausmann, Ricardo, Laura D. Tyson, and Saadia Zahidi. *The Global Gender Gap Report 2010*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Economic Forum, 2010, 16.

¹⁶⁵ Appendix A, Table 4.

education about the issues surrounding gender equality. There are a few potential options for solving these issues present in the French educational system.

The main solution to the problem of teachers' behavior is to train teachers to be more aware of their behavior toward their students, because the way teachers behave can often influence how children develop their gender identities. Teachers need to show their students that girl and boy identities are not simply confined to girls liking pink and being a princess and boys liking firefighters and trucks, and that other approaches are possible.¹⁶⁶ Teachers need to raise awareness about gender inequalities to their students and emphasize respect for boys and girls.

Teachers should be more aware of the stereotypes that exist in textbooks and should be encouraged to make a conscious effort to combat the traditional notions of female students being ignorant and invisible, and male students as being only interested in science and technology.¹⁶⁷ Teachers need to educate their students about these stereotypes and the influence they can have on the development of their identities as boys or girls.¹⁶⁸ Therefore, in an effort to put a stop to gender inequalities, teachers should review the textbooks and literature they are going to offer to their students and remove all traces of stereotypes, and emphasize that, since women represent over half of the population, power relations and the distribution of power between the sexes is important in structuring society.¹⁶⁹ The French school system can also promote gender equality by bringing more diversity to the teachers of childcare, kindergarten, and primary education, which would demonstrate to the children, that men, like a woman, can also care for and teach children.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Chevallereau, "La construction identitaire des jeunes enfants est un element-clé de la lute contre les inégalités de sexe (The construction of identity of young children is a key element in the fight against gender inequalities)."

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

A common trend amongst French females graduates is to pursue traditionally female occupations. This trend could potentially be solved with the expansion of women's studies programs in universities, support for feminist research, and increased opportunities for female scholars and artists.¹⁷¹ A gender studies program is often defined as seeking to understand gender differences and the difference between gender as a social construction, meaning constructed by society, the cultural environment, and other things rooted in history between the sexes.¹⁷²

Hélène Périvier, an economist and co-chair of the research and teaching knowledge on gender at Sciences Po, otherwise known as the Paris Institute of Political Studies, believes that the introduction of gender studies programs in French universities will help to solve the problem of gender inequalities in French society. Périvier argues that, since gender inequality is a major issue in contemporary French society, it is important to educate students about gender studies, so that they can understand the gender inequalities that are produced by society.¹⁷³ The goal of the gender studies program is to lay the foundation for establishing equality in other realms of society and building a more egalitarian society, and to educate all students on gender issues, regardless of their career path, so they are better able to address gender inequalities in not only society, but also in their future careers.¹⁷⁴

Economics

French women struggle to achieve a high status in the work force, and they tend to experience a variety of obstacles that prevent them from advancing to high-level, leadership positions in the work force. These obstacles include gendered occupations, the wage gap, a

¹⁷¹ Dorothy McBride Stetson, *Women's Rights in France*, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1987: 108.

¹⁷² Chevallereau, "La construction identitaire des jeunes enfants est un element-clé de la lute contre les inégalités de sexe (The construction of identity of young children is a key element in the fight against gender inequalities)."

¹⁷³ Chevallereau, "La construction identitaire des jeunes enfants est un element-clé de la lute contre les inégalités de sexe (The construction of identity of young children is a key element in the fight against gender inequalities)."

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

patriarchal corporate culture, and domestic responsibilities. There are several solutions that have the potential to solve some of these issues in France's work force. One solution is to increase the encouragement of female entrepreneurship, particularly early on in young French females' education.¹⁷⁵ Young French women tend to lack professional ambition because they are often encouraged to pursue traditional female occupations, which are typically not highly valued by French society. Another solution is to increase male awareness of the obstacles that prevent women from being able to achieve high-level positions.¹⁷⁶ As the majority in high-level, leadership positions, men have the power and ability to advocate gender equality among corporate hierarchies in the work force.

The French people, but particularly French men, should recognize that French women need more female role models in senior positions, as well as, more senior position men to make time for the family and participation in domestic responsibilities. Women spend on average five hours and one minute per day on childcare and domestic chores, while men only spend about two hours and seven minutes per day on childcare and domestic chores.¹⁷⁷ Gender inequality would probably be greatly reduced if French men increased the amount of time they spend helping to raise the children and participating in domestic chores, because then their wife would have more time to dedicate to her career.

The French government also has the ability to solve the gender inequalities in France's work force. One possible solution is for the French government to increase pensions for part-

¹⁷⁵ Adriana Gardella, "Reporting From the Women's Forum," *New York Times*, October 14, 2010 <http://boss.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/10/14/reporting-from-the-womens-forum/?scp=3&sq=wOMEN%27S%20Forum%20in%20France&st=cse> (accessed Oct. 21, 2010).

¹⁷⁶ Katrin Bennhold, "Plenty of Suits and Ties at Annual Women's Business Forum," *New York Times*, October 17, 2010 http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/18/business/global/18forum.html?_r=1&scp=2&sq=wOMEN%27S%20Forum%20in%20France&st=cse (accessed Oct. 21, 2010).

¹⁷⁷ Katrin Bennhold, "Where Having It All Doesn't Mean Having Equality," *New York Times* October 11, 2010 http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/12/world/europe/12iht-ffrance.html?_r=2&pagewanted=print (accessed October 12, 2010).

time workers, especially since 30 percent of French women work part-time, as oppose to only 6 percent of men.¹⁷⁸ Currently, the French government only provides full benefits and pensions to those who are considered to have a “full” career. But unfortunately many French women are unable to have a “full” career, by the government’s standards, because of their domestic responsibilities and their inability to raise their position within the corporate hierarchy.

Another solution is to make more of an effort to reduce the gender gap, because, currently, the *Senat* is hesitant to enforce the performance obligations of companies to remove the gender gap. If the French government is going to pass legislation, requiring companies to remove the gender gap, then it needs to follow through and strictly enforce the removal of this gender gap, otherwise companies will have no incentive to make changes and the gender gap will continue to exist.¹⁷⁹ There is also the option of using gender quotas. While there is much debate on the effectiveness of gender quotas, Maurice Lévy, chief executive of the advertising company Publicis, admits that “the threat of legislation in France was what recently impelled the mostly male chief executives of the industry association he heads to adopt a code of good practice committing them to a minimum share of women on boards.”¹⁸⁰ Therefore, considering the use of gender quotas to diversify high-level leadership positions may prove to be an effective solution for the immediate future.

Politics

Gender inequalities appear to be the worst in French politics. The level of female representatives in the French national parliament is incredibly low, especially in comparison to

¹⁷⁸ Appendix B, Table 2.

¹⁷⁹ Mathilde Gérard, “Retraites: ‘Il y a une tolérance sociale à l’égard des femmes les plus fragiles’ (Pensions: ‘There is a social tolerance against women most vulnerable’),” *LeMonde.fr*, October 06, 2010, http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2010/10/06/retraites-il-y-a-une-tolerance-sociale-a-l-egard-des-femmes-les-plus-fragiles_1420940_823448.html (accessed Oct. 21, 2010).

¹⁸⁰ Bennhold, “Plenty of Suits and Ties at Annual Women’s Business Forum.”

the level of female representatives in countries around the world. France ranked 47th out of 134 countries for women's political empowerment in the Global Gender Gap Report 2010, which indicates that the French government needs to make some dramatic changes in order to improve women's status in politics. Therefore, the solutions that are needed to put an end to the gender inequality in politics are to develop a way to put an end to French men's monopoly of power in politics, and to provide French women with more opportunities to get involved in politics.

Within the French education system, teachers can emphasize the need for equal participation of men and women in politics, and foster women's interest in citizen engagement by encouraging them to express their different experiences and visions for social progress.¹⁸¹ French universities should make an effort to offer training courses and workshops to aspiring female candidates or to women who are interested in getting involved in politics.¹⁸² French universities need to recognize and support women who want to get involved in French politics by helping them to develop networks and by providing them with important resources. This solution can especially be achieved through the increase in women's access to and participation in France's Grands Écoles. Political parties can contribute by creating women's groups and committees as a way to increase French women's interest and participation in politics, because these groups and committees would provide French women with a space where they could express their differing socio-political views. Political parties also need to provide these groups and committees with funds and materials so the French women party activists feel supported by the political party.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ "Women's Political Equality: The Project of the Century," *The Groupes Femmes, Politiques et Démocratie Papers*, no. 2 (December 2005), 9.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

Unfortunately, as a result of France's lack of effort to increase women's participation in politics, political parties are having trouble finding enough women to get involved in politics.¹⁸⁴ After giving women the right to vote, the French government seemed to stop there in terms of creating gender equality in politics. Consequently, overtime, the government began to loose touch with civil society and become more of an elite male society. The French recognize this growing gap between politics and society, and are, therefore, in favor of incorporating more women in politics with the hope that women "would reinforce democracy and improve political decisions in a large number of areas, from education and environment to financial management and security."¹⁸⁵ Thus, the French government can no longer put off the issue of women's presence in politics, effective changes need to be made and they need to be made soon.

French Society

The French society is plagued with the deeply embedded roots of patriarchy, and French women have to battle this type of attitude on a daily basis. Therefore, the key to achieving a true level of equality between French men and women begins with a change in attitude of the private sphere.¹⁸⁶ This necessary fundamental change can occur by looking at the successes of previous social movements. The first step is for the underprivileged group, which in this case is French women, to form an organized group.¹⁸⁷ Unfortunately, as discussed earlier, French women do not generally have supportive relationships with one another, but tend to be manipulative and competitive with one another. French women need to recognize that they are all in the same

¹⁸⁴ Caroline Lambert, "French Women in Politics: The Long Road to Parity," The Brookings Institution, http://www.brookings.edu/articles/2001/05france_lambert.aspx (accessed Nov. 16, 2010).

¹⁸⁵ Lambert, "French Women in Politics: The Long Road to Parity."

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Rachel A. Rosenfeld and Kathryn B. Ward, "The Contemporary U.S. Women's Movement: An Empirical Example of Competition Theory," *Sociological Forum* 6 no. 3 (Sept. 1991): 473.

position, that they all face the same challenges, and they need to organize themselves around this status they hold in French society in order to gain a competitive edge.¹⁸⁸

Since collective action is essential to bringing about change, French women need to form a social movement organization that identifies with their goals and will work to implement these goals, and whose membership includes individuals in high-level, leadership positions.¹⁸⁹ French women should work with individuals in high-level positions to not only give legitimacy to their movement, but to also provide their organization with leadership, money, influence, resources, and networks.¹⁹⁰ The French women's social movement organization would also greatly benefit from having top male executives among its members, who participate in implementing the organization's goal. Some top French male executives have already become more involved in the issue of gender equality in France's work force by participating in the Sixth Women's Forum for the Economy and Society that took place in Deauville, France from October 14 to 16, 2010.¹⁹¹ Whether their participation in the Forum will influence change is uncertain at the moment, but their presence is definitely a step in the right direction.

French women need to bring more attention to the French female social experience by providing a forum for the voices of those who feel they have been overlooked or treated unjustly. The French need to hear the experiences of French women's struggles with gender inequalities, so that the French people have to come face to face with gender inequality issues. French women should focus their attention on the private sphere, on raising awareness among the French people, and not on politics.¹⁹² They should focus on changing the attitude and behavior of the private

¹⁸⁸ Rosenfeld, 473.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 475.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 473.

¹⁹¹ Bennhold, "Plenty of Suits and Ties at Annual Women's Business Forum."

¹⁹² Rosenfeld, 487.

sphere, because once this is achieved, then they will have an even bigger support to help bring about change in French politics.

One of the key discoveries of French women's current situation in France is their lack of solidarity. This factor alone could change everything. French women's lack of solidarity is the fundamental reason why French women remain in this situation, because behind their lack of solidarity is suspicion and competition. For that reason, the crucial factor that will bring about change is through the collective action of French women. Therefore, it is essential that French women support each other, form communities of women to build solidarity amongst each other, and to form a single, powerful entity that can combat the gender inequalities that plague French society.

APPENDIX A

Quantitative Analysis of the Status of Women's Education in Contemporary France

Table 1: Share of women among tertiary students: women among students in ISCED levels 5-6, as a percentage of the total students at this level

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
France	54.7	54.4	54.2	54.1	54.8	55.0	55.0	55.2	55.3	55.3	55.2

Eurostat. "Share of women among tertiary students; Women among students in ISCED levels 5-6 – as % of the total students at this level." European Commission.

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=tps00063&language=en> (accessed Oct. 18, 2010).

Table 2: Graduates in ISCED 5 and 6 by Sex

Year	Total	Male	Female
1998	497,188	221,402	275,786
1999	500,079	222,997	277,082
2000	508,189	224,764	283,425
2001	532,076	236,685	295,391
2002	-	-	-
2003	584,849	254,105	330,744
2004	-	-	-
2005	-	-	-
2006	643,600	286,575	357,025
2007	622,937	279,808	343,129
2008	621,444	278,246	343,198

Eurostat. "Graduates in ISCED 5 and 6 by age and sex." European Commission. Under "Enrolments, graduates, entrants, personnel and language learning-absolute numbers."

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/education/data/database> (accessed Oct. 18, 2010)

Table 3: Science and Technology Graduates by Gender: female graduates (ISCED 5-6) in mathematics, science and technology per 1,000 of female population aged 20-29, and male graduates (ISCED 5-6) in mathematics, science and technology per 1,000 of male population aged 20-29

France	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Female	11.6	11.6	12.1	12.0	-	13.4	-	12.9	11.7	11.6	11.4
Male	25.4	26.4	27.0	28.1	-	30.4	-	32.7	30.2	29.7	28.9

Eurostat. "Science and technology graduates by gender." European Commission.

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=tsiir050&language=en> (accessed Oct. 18, 2010).

Table 4: Enrollment in tertiary education

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Female	63%	63%	63%	62%	61%
Male	49%	49%	50%	49%	48%

Hausmann, Ricardo, Laura D. Tyson, and Saadia Zahidi. *The Global Gender Gap Report 2010*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Economic Forum, 2010: 139.

APPENDIX B

Quantitative Analysis of the Economic Status of Women in Contemporary France

Table 1: Employment by sex, age groups, professional status, and occupation (1000)
(Sex: Male/Female; Age Group: 25 and 64 years; Professional Status: employment;
Occupation)

Data for Females (1000)

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Legislators, Senior Officials, & Managers	-	-	-	-	666	739	719	766	782	798	875	840
Professionals	-	-	-	-	1,327	1,324	1,432	1,407	1,477	1,564	1,499	1,546
Technicians & Associate Professionals	-	-	-	-	1,965	2,129	2,067	2,179	2,219	2,330	2,356	2,374
Clerks	-	-	-	-	2,224	2,078	2,063	2,106	2,194	2,083	2,037	2,036
Service Workers and Shop & Market Sales Workers	-	-	-	-	1,804	1,864	1,956	2,016	1,995	2,017	1,971	2,064
Skilled Agricultural & Fishery Workers	-	-	-	-	277	278	215	244	213	207	192	203
Craft & related Trade Workers	-	-	-	-	239	231	212	246	209	208	226	211
Plant & Machine Operators and Assemblers	-	-	-	-	418	452	445	414	441	387	340	364
Elementary Occupations	-	-	-	-	1,339	1,356	1,366	1,419	1,440	1,457	1,537	1,530
Armed Forces	-	-	-	-	15	17	31	27	37	29	23	25

Eurostat. "Employment by sex, age groups, professional status and occupation." *European Commission*, 2010.

Under "Employment-LFS series,"

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/employment_unemployment_lfs/data/database (accessed Oct. 17, 2010).

Data for Males (1000)

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Legislators, Senior Officials, & Managers	-	-	-	-	1,252	1,214	1,244	1,297	1,281	1,306	1,401	1,337
Professionals	-	-	-	-	1,719	1,779	1,813	1,862	1,863	1,864	1,849	1,922
Technicians & Associate Professionals	-	-	-	-	1,988	1,987	2,027	2,020	2,109	2,204	2,076	2,096

Clerks	-	-	-	-	662	654	642	651	645	708	714	694
Service Workers and Shop & Market Sales Workers	-	-	-	-	675	645	680	710	658	661	699	747
Skilled Agricultural & Fishery Workers	-	-	-	-	644	648	632	628	572	540	614	620
Craft & related Trade Workers	-	-	-	-	2,366	2,328	2,343	2,273	2,323	2,358	2,262	2,232
Plant & Machine Operators and Assemblers	-	-	-	-	1,675	1,643	1,624	1,620	1,689	1,627	1,565	1,585
Elementary Occupations	-	-	-	-	711	723	727	713	745	790	686	719
Armed Forces	-	-	-	-	251	281	252	248	252	236	226	212

Eurostat. "Employment by sex, age groups, professional status and occupation." European Commission. Under "Employment-LFS series,"

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/employment_unemployment_lfs/data/database (accessed Oct. 17, 2010).

Table 2: Persons Employed Part-Time (percentage of total employment)

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Female	31.4	30.8	30.1	29.8	29.5	29.9	30.2	30.3	30.3	29.4	29.8
Male	5.5	5.3	5.0	5.2	5.4	5.4	5.8	5.8	5.7	5.8	6.0

Eurostat. "Persons employed part-time-Total." European Commission.

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tps00159&plugin=1> (accessed Oct. 19, 2010).

Table 3: Males and Females age 15-64 years who are employers (1000)

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Female	-	-	-	-	249.8	251.5	242.3	240.1	286.8	300.5	261.8	247.5
Male	-	-	-	-	831.4	816.6	874.2	860.6	842.8	872.1	882.7	873.0

Eurostat. "Employment by sex, age groups, and professional status." European Commission. Under "Employment-LFS series," http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/employment_unemployment_lfs/data/database (accessed Oct. 17, 2010).

Table 4: Unemployment Rate by Gender (unemployment rate represents unemployed persons as a percentage of the labour force, meaning the total number of people employed and unemployed)

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Female	12.1	10.8	9.9	9.7	9.9	10.3	10.3	10.1	9.0	8.4	9.8	8.0
Male	8.9	7.5	7.0	7.7	8.1	8.4	8.4	8.4	7.8	7.3	9.2	7.0

Eurostat. "Employment Rate by Gender." European Commission.

<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tsiem110&plugin=1>

(accessed Oct. 17, 2010).

Table 5: Labour Force Participation

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Female	48%	62%	62%	64%	65%
Male	61%	74%	73%	74%	75%

Ricardo Hausmann, Laura D. Tyson, and Saadia Zahidi, *The Global Gender Gap Report 2010* (Geneva, Switzerland: World Economic Forum, 2010), 139.

APPENDIX C

Quantitative Analysis of Women's Status in Politics in Contemporary France

Table 1: Women in Parliament

Year	Female	Male
2010	19%	81%
2009	18%	82%
2008	18%	82%
2007	12%	88%
2006	12%	88%

Hausmann, Ricardo, Laura D. Tyson, *The Global Gender Gap Report 2010* (Geneva, Switzerland: World Economic Forum, 2010), 139.

Table 2: Women in National Parliaments: France from 2000-2010

(**Bold** indicates that it was an election year)

Lower or Single House					Upper House or Senate			
Year	Elections	Seats	Women	%W	Elections	Seats	Women	%W
2000	05-1997	577	63	10.9%	09-1998	321	19	5.9%
2001	05-1997	577	63	10.9%	09-2001	321	35	10.9%
2002	06-2002	577	70	12.1%	09-2001	321	35	10.9%
2003	06-2002	574	70	12.2%	09-2001	321	35	10.9%
2004	06-2002	574	70	12.2%	09-2004	331	56	16.9%
2005	06-2002	574	70	12.2%	09-2004	331	56	16.9%
2006	06-2002	574	70	12.2%	09-2004	331	56	16.9%
2007	06-2007	577	105	18.2%	09-2004	331	56	16.9%
2008	06-2007	577	105	18.2%	09-2008	342	79	23.1%
2009	06-2007	577	105	18.2%	09-2008	342	79	23.1%
2010	06-2007	577	109	18.9%	09-2008	342	79	23.1%

Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in National Parliaments," Inter-Parliamentary Union, <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif-arc.htm> (accessed Oct. 30, 2010).

Table 3: Women in Ministerial Positions

Year	Female	Male	Percentage of Females
2010	26	74	36%
2009	47	53	88%
2008	47	53	88%
2007	18	82	21%
2006	18	82	21%

Hausmann, *The Global Gender Gap Report 2010*, 139.

APPENDIX D

Table 1: Formal childcare by age group and duration – percent over the population of each age group (Age group: between 3 years and minimum compulsory school age)

	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
Between 0–29 hours	–	52%	51%	52%	56%
30 hours or over	–	43%	42%	42%	39%

Eurostat. “Formal childcare by age group and duration - % over the population of each age group.” European Commission. Under “Childcare Arrangements,” http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/income_social_inclusion_living_conditions/data/database (accessed Oct. 17, 2010).

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