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The gendered subtext in show jumping

Authors: Favero Lara & Krasowska Emilia
Supervisor: Jammaers Eline
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Table of content

1. Introduction.....	1
2. Literature review.....	3
2.1. Gender norms and gender labour market segregation.....	3
2.2. Equestrian context	8
2.2.1. History of horses' use by men: from transport to leisure.....	8
2.2.2. The feminisation of equestrian sports: from exclusion to majority at amateur level	10
2.3. The equestrian Olympic disciplines	12
2.3.1. History of equestrian Olympic games.....	12
2.3.2. Fe/male participation at the Olympics	13
2.4. Fe/male participation in non-Olympian equestrian disciplines	15
2.5. Gender (in)equality in show jumping.....	16
2.5.1. The role of biological (sex) differences and socialisation (gender) differences in show jumping.....	17
2.5.2. Successful women in show jumping	19
2.5.3. Persisting mechanisms of gender inequality in show jumping	21
2.6. Conclusion and implications	25
3. Methodology.....	28
4. Data analysis	34
4.1. Which gender norms are prevalent in show jumping?	34
4.2. How do equine professionals perceive gender integration in show jumping?	46
4.3. Conclusion.....	60
5. Discussion.....	62
5.1. Results discussion.....	62
5.2. Limits of this research	65
5.3. Solutions	66
5.4. Directions for future research	67
6. Conclusion	68
7. Bibliography	70
8. Appendix.....	79
8.1. Assessment grid.....	79

1. Introduction

For more than 60 years, women and men have been competing together in equestrian sports during the Olympic Games. Specifically, women were formally given access to dressage in 1952, jumping in 1956 and eventing in 1964. However, we realised that the proportion of women participants does not evolve favourably with each Olympic Games. Between the Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, the proportion of male riders increased in all three disciplines compared to the proportion of female riders. As a matter of fact, for Rio 2016, the participation rate of women in equestrian sports was 39,02% whereas for Tokyo 2020 this rate was 35,93%. Despite women's formal access, sports in general continue to be considered as a male domain due to high need for performance and competitiveness. Women, on the other hand, are seen as gentle and devoted to their families. It could therefore be that even in sports where men and women compete together at the highest (Olympic) level, women continue to suffer from subtle processes of gender discrimination. Therefore, more research attention is needed to investigate women's experiences of gender (in)equality and their perception of equal opportunities in the context of show jumping. Specifically, this master thesis is interested in outlying gender norms that come into play within the field of equestrian show jumping. Additionally, it aims to investigate the perceptions and opinions of equestrian professionals with regard to gender integration in the field. In the analysis of our data, focus goes out to the perceived physical and psychological differences between the sexes. We try to understand why so many women participate in equestrian sports at the amateur level but leave at the professional level. We thus try to understand whether women experience a gender disadvantage compared to men.

In order to study gender (in)equality in high-level show jumping and to identify the different experiences of male and female riders, we first discuss some general theoretical constructs such as gender norms and gender segregation. We then move on to give an overview of the gendered history of Olympic sports. Next, we discuss the nature of equestrian sports and the feminisation of the sports at amateur level. After that, we move on to discuss equestrian sports at the Olympic games and women's (lack of) participation herein. We indicate a number of mechanisms of gender inequality that have been identified in the literature about show jumping so far. After this literature review, we move on to the methodology of our empirical part. We will conduct qualitative research to find out the views of riders and other professionals from the equestrian world, such as managers of equestrian establishments or breeders, to find

out their position on this. After the presentation of the findings, we move on to the discussion to identify the commonalities and discrepancies between the literature review and the results of our qualitative research and therefore the opinions of equestrian professionals. To end, we propose solutions to the major problems encountered during our analysis as well as topics for future research to be carried out.

2. Literature review

Currently, the majority of high-performance sports are gender segregated, i.e., women and men compete in different events. The main objective is to give all participants equal opportunities of success. However, some sports, such as sailing, motorbike racing and equestrian sports, are gender-neutral, i.e., women and men compete in the same events and at the same level. In these sports, no gender has an advantage over the other. Through our research we will investigate whether equestrian sports, and more specifically high-level show jumping, actually provide equal opportunities for both genders.

But it is important to define what a person's gender is, which is different from their sex. According to UNESCO (n.d.), sex is the set of biological, hereditary, and genetic characteristics that organise individuals into two categories: males and females. While gender is defined as the socially and culturally constructed relationships between women and men.

2.1. Gender norms and gender labour market segregation

The term “gender norms” means “how women and men are expected to act, speak, dress, groom and conduct themselves based upon the assigned sex” (PlannedParenthood, 2021). For example, “women are generally expected to dress in typically feminine ways and be polite, accommodating and nurturing. While men are expected to be strong, aggressive, and bold” (PlannedParenthood, 2021). Each culture has its own gender roles expectations, which can vary from group to group. Moreover, these norms can also evolve and change over time. For example, if wearing trousers was considered masculine, this is not currently the case today.

This phenomenon became popular in the 1970s thanks to feminist movements whose main objective was to prove that differences based solely on gender were socially constructed and not the result of biological factors. These differences are therefore not natural but immutable. The term “gender norms” entered the lexicon of health and development at the end of the 20th century when gender equality was promoted by international bodies. Gender is the largest categorisation in the population itself compared to “race, age and occupation” (Cislaghi, 2019) and has no justification whatsoever.

The gender is perceived as “a social system that apportions resources, roles, power and entitlement according to whether a person or practice is perceived as male or female, masculine or feminine” (Cislaghi, 2019). Gender-based relationships are known to be highly hierarchical and give more privileges to men than women. However, this gender discrimination can be as

harmful to men as to women. Norms are part of a component of the gender system, “along with gender roles, gender socialisation and gendered power relations” (Cislaghi, 2019). Thanks to the social rules and expectations that form the gender norms, the gender-based system remains intact.

Four main features constitute the gender norms. Firstly, “Gender norms are learned in childhood, from parents and peers, in a process commonly called socialisation” (Cislaghi, 2019) and are “reinforced or challenged in family and the larger social context: through school, the workplace, religion, the media, and other social institutions” (Cislaghi, 2019). Second, these norms do not treat women and men equally, which conveys unequal power, often to the disadvantage of women. Further, these norms are anchored in and reproduced by institutions and by prejudices about the functioning of institutions. Finally, these norms are created and “reported” through social interactions, “as individuals engage in practices that signify, align or contest various notions of masculinity or maleness and femininity or femaleness” (Cislaghi, 2019).

According to Seppala (2013), a lecturer at the Yale School of Management and Faculty Director of the Yale School of Management’s Women’s Leadership Program, “Women have more biological potential for compassion than men”. They “have more sensitivity about others’ well-being” than the men do (Seppala, 2013). Therefore, they are more suited for carrying roles for instance which leads to their over-representation in the care sector. This affirmation can be supported by Eurostat, there are “more females than males in personal care and teaching professions in the EU” (Eurostat, 2018). In 2016, “The highest representation of women in the EU is recorded in occupations related to personal care (89%) and teachers (71%)” (Eurostat, 2018).

In today’s society, men and women are not always perceived in the same way. This is known as social segregation, which can be defined as: “the unequal distribution of men and women in the occupational structure sometimes also (and more accurately) called “occupational segregation by sex”. There are two forms: “vertical segregation” describes the clustering of men and the top of occupational hierarchies and of women at the bottom; “horizontal segregation” describes the fact that at the same occupational level (that is within occupational classes, or even occupations themselves) men and women have different job tasks. Degrees of sex segregation vary inversely with the level of aggregation of data” (Encyclopedia, 2020).

Since childhood, women and men are not educated in the same way. From birth, girls are dressed in pink and boys in blue. They are therefore hardly differentiated from each other when they are born (Cislaghi, and Heise, 2019). Then, as they grow older, the gap between the two genders widens. Girls play with dolls or with a small cooker while boys play with small cars or construction tools. Clothes are also different, girls often wear much less trousers than boys, colours and patterns are different. Growing up, some schools even offer girls the opportunity to learn how to be a good housewife. Differences continue in the choice of occupations. Some jobs are reserved for men, such as construction, for example. At the time, women were forced to stay and look after children while men worked. The reasons for gender classification can be mainly explained by various factors such as social norms, cultural habits as well as commercial, biological, and economic arguments (Dashper, 2012). Nevertheless, we will see thereafter that gender discrimination can also be the result of poverty, hunger, and lack of education (UN women, n.d.).

For centuries, women have fought to acquire rights and to occupy an equal position as men in society. Thanks to these fierce battles, their place in the society has improved considerably. All over the world, declarations, conventions, and legislation have been put in place to strengthen gender equality and women's rights. The governments around the world have set up legislation covering areas such as the right to property or inheritance, equal wages, working conditions, maternity benefits, and job security's (Singh, 2014). Examples of organisations and institutions that protect women's rights include UN Women, Association for Women's Rights in Development, International, Centre for Reproductive Rights, One Love Foundation, Girls not Brides, #Metoo campaign, etc. Of course, this list is far from being exhaustive.

Nowadays, women are more independent, and their roles are no longer limited to household chores. More and more women have the right to education as well as they succeed in their professional life. The figures of women who become successful entrepreneurs or who work in various professions such as teachers, engineers, doctors, managers are increasing day by day, even in the lower and middle classes. Since 1991, women have also been present in the so-called male jobs such as "armed force, air force and naval force" (Singh, 2014.). In addition to the professional and educational fields, women are also present in other fields such as politics and sports.

To confirm this statement and know the real place of women in contemporary society, a study “Women, business and the law 2019” (BusinessFightsPoverty, 2019) was carried out between 2009 and 2018. According to this study, women are still discriminated against in the professional environment. Despite the evolution of women’s rights, gender-based inequalities still exist around the world, and as a result, women and girls still face problems such as “domestic and sexual violence, lower pay, lack of access to education, and inadequate healthcare” (Amnesty International, 2021). In addition, in some countries women’s rights are strictly limited: women are unable to exercise their rights, cannot be autonomous and are dependent on their husbands.

Through this section we have seen that both cultures shape the behaviours and habits of women in society. They are not free to act as they wish but must conform to the feminine ideal imposed by society. As a result, they are constantly confronted with great social pressure. This gender duality is also present in sport because all disciplines are divided into two categories based on gender criteria. This will be seen in the section below “Sport context”.

Although we do not really know when people started doing sports, we know that at the beginning, sports were reserved for the high class and competitions were organised in large sanctuaries. The first known date is that of the first Olympic Games, which took place in the year 686 BC (KULeuven, 2012). At that time there were only seven sports: running, long jump, shot put, javelin, boxing, pankration, and equestrian sports. Other types of competitions have been organised such as the Pythian Games or the Nemean Games. The games (Olympic.org, 2020) were often organised in homage to the gods. They were organised until the early fifth century AD. Adult women (married women) were banned from attending the games. They were punished if they broke this rule. Some women such as prostitutes and maidens were allowed to attend to make it easier for them to meet men. Nevertheless, horseracing was less regulated with regard to gender. The issue of breeding on the part of a woman was never addressed, as it was thought that the woman would not have the means to do so anyway. As a result, some women were able to participate as horse owners. At that time, riders were often slaves. After this kind of event, sports were open to women, but the rules were different for them. In fact, the men did naked sports while the women had to keep their clothes on. Women were described as less beautiful to look at when doing sports and therefore had to wear clothes (Kemp, 2009).

From the 19th century onwards, sport was aimed at young boys in public schools to enable them to develop skills such as leadership, masculinity, and teamwork. Physical activities

were very limited or even non-existent for young girls as they had other roles to fulfil as women. They therefore had to devote themselves to activities that would enable them to become good mothers and devoted wives to their husbands. Their presence was expected in order to take care of the house and the children.

This duality based exclusively on gender in sports disciplines is seen as natural and obvious: sport is exercised at different frequencies by each gender category, since each must hold to the responsibilities assigned to them by society. If one of the parties does not comply with these responsibilities, it risks disapproval, stigmatisation or even exclusion by the others (Dashper, 2009). According to Dashper (2009), a researcher in gender issues and interspecies encounters (LBU, n.d.), this sport classification is a form of protection for women against stronger men (Dashper, 2009). They can therefore compete without being disadvantaged in comparison to men's higher performance thanks to this segregation within sports disciplines.

Moreover, sport in general is perceived as a masculine world where aspects such as aggressiveness, competition and heterosexuality prevail, making it almost impossible for women to enter, evolve in the sporting world and generate revenue from their performance. Therefore, female athletes find it more difficult to find sponsors, the media do not support them because all their attention is focused on men, they face exclusion and stigmatisation from society as the sports world is not a place for women and (if they can face financial problems the sport is their only way to make money and they cannot make a breakthrough in this environment). In addition, among those who perform in the sport they practise, they are accused of not being feminine enough. They are therefore constantly stigmatised and criticised.

Despite the fact that this gender polarisation is negative for women, it can also be harmful for men. In order to perform in the world of sport, speed and strength are two essential factors. This leads to the alienation and exploitation of men. Indeed, men are under constant pressure to develop their muscles and to look like the ideal athlete whether they adopt extreme behaviours such as drug use or steroid use (Dashper, 2009). Secondly, the fact that men are surrounded only by each other leads to the dehumanisation of the men (Dashper, 2009). Feelings are repressed because they are not considered a male factor and therefore, they develop a strong aggressiveness and become insensitive. Removing segregation based solely on gender may be a way to change gender considerations and perceptions of sport, as female athletes may be able to step out of the shadows and perform in their discipline.

Even though the sports are gender segregated, there are currently some sports such as sailing, motor racing and equestrian sports where men and women compete together equally without distinction of gender.

2.2. Equestrian context

In this section we will look at the history of men's use of horses in order to understand why the equestrian field is dominated by men. Finally, we will discuss how women have been included in equestrian sports.

2.2.1. History of horses' use by men: from transport to leisure

For centuries, the equestrian world has been associated with men whether through the mythology of the centaur, the valiant knights, the cavalry charger, the cowboys of the Far West or the North American Indian buffalo hunter (Birke & Brandt, 2009). In addition to these representations, men used horses to perform their work in 'the agriculture, forestry, transport sector and in the army' (Hedenborg & Hedenborg, n.d.). In short, a real man was one who knew how to ride a horse.

Firstly, owning a horse has always been a symbol of wealth. As a matter of fact, it allowed for the transportation of things as well as a faster movement than walking. This animal was also a measure of wealth and served as a means of exchange. A person's wealth varied according to the number of valuable horses owned. Those who owned a horse felt superior to those who did not, whether it was the autocracy or the cowboys who had a horse at the expense of the farmers.

Secondly, farmers used horses in their work. They were used as draught animals to work in the fields. They could also replace men in certain fields for traction work. They were used to pull machines and carts. They were useful in the fields of industry and mining. According to Hall (n.d.), more or less 65,000 horses were used in the mines in Great Britain. In fact, their strength was far superior to that of men: a horse has the strength of 10 men. It was with the advent of engines that horses were less useful to the industry.

Thirdly, in the military context and more precisely during wars to envy territories and overcome people. The mount had the following roles: transportation, mission of reconnaissance, cavalry charges, packing supplies and communication. War horses were used in the empires of Egypt, Greece, Rome, the East West, Asia, and the steppes. According to

D. S. Mills, by 1200 the soldiers understood that riding a horse would allow them to make their movements faster and more efficiently (Mills, 2005). As a result of this awareness each troop wanted to have horses that were at least as efficient as their enemy. Horses were selected according to their size, i.e., the largest horses were favoured during the wars. The search for the characteristics of an ideal war horse evolved between the Middle Ages and the 19th century.

According to Tadeusz Sulimirski (n.d.), men did not start riding until the year 1000 BC. Before that date, horses were pulling carts, “Driving was more important than riding”. However, these statements are not certain as some of them prove the contrary. According to Arther Ferill’s (2004), it was Assyrians who began to ride horses in the military and John Keegan (2004) states that the military was already riding horses in the 8th century NCP. However, little work has been dedicated to this subject and it is difficult to know the historical reality.

Horses were also used for leisure activities, such as hunting, which was often an activity practised by upper-class men. The speed of the horses allowed the hunters to reach the game more quickly. Following the introduction of the Enclosure Acts in the 18th century, the vast fields were fenced off. For this reason, horses that could gallop fast and were able to clear obstacles to keep track of games and dogs were primordial.

We observe that the horse is associated with masculinity because, on the one hand, we see that throughout history men were confronted with the management of horses whether for utilities (work context or military context) or for leisure purposes. Grooming was also a male activity as it is hard and dirty work. On the other hand, a horse is a large animal that weighs about 500 kg and reacts according to its instincts, so qualities such as leadership and self-confidence are required to make a horse obey and to know how to manage it safely. These qualities have historically been assigned to the male gender and are considered undesirable for women.

Finally, horse riding was associated with power and wealth as mentioned above. As a result, this activity was mainly accessible to men from high society. From the mid-twentieth century, the equestrian world has been opened to civilian participants, including women and people who are less fortunate (Daspher, 2012). At present, you do not have to own land or a horse in order to ride a horse. There are many equestrian centres where people can take lessons and, in this way, enter their relationship with horses. According to Robinson (1999), only 44% of riders in Great Britain belong to the top socio-economic classes, which account for about

48% of the country's population. This shows that this activity is practised by a wide variety of people with different backgrounds.

2.2.2. The feminisation of equestrian sports: from exclusion to majority at amateur level

Although the equestrian world was previously perceived as masculine through the fields of work, agriculture, transport, and the military; today horse riding is associated with femininity: more women than men ride horses at amateur level but also in dressage (amateur and high level). According to the French Equestrian Federation (FFE), "Equestrianism is the leading sport for women in France. The rider population is predominantly female. Women represent 8 out of 10 licence holders. Equestrian centres are mostly run by women and in the riding arenas it is more common to observe female riders than male riders, especially teenagers as more than 60% of the riding population is under 15 years old, while male riders are older" (Equipedia, 2018). The equestrian world, especially at the amateur level is associated more with women as they tend to create a special bond with their horses and their relationship is emotional and characterised by "caring". While men tend to be less involved in the care of horses because they are more interested in riding. It is thanks to the "horse girl" and her interest in caring for horses that the importance of the horse in society has increased.

As we already know, in the past, riding a horse was a sign of domination and power, so horse riding was purely a male activity. However, the first traces of women riding horses come from "ancient Greece with the myth of the Amazons" (Cartwright, 2019). Their use of horses, more than just riding, "highlights their emancipation from patriarchy, at a time when slavery was practised" (Wiki-Horse, n.d.). This use of horses by these women did not leave positive traces in the societies of OTAN which were characterised to use horses only in specific situations. For example, if a woman's husband died, she could continue her business and therefore use the horse. In the aristocratic class of the society men but also women rode horses. However, there were many restrictions on the women. The wife could accompany her husband to some courses but could not go alone and could not ride astride (classic position where the legs are positioned on both sides of the horse) (Wikihorse, n.d.). Therefore, women remained dependent on men even in their leisure time, as the amazon position prevented them from getting on or off their horses alone. Moreover, owning and caring for horses was still a male activity.

During the 19th and 20th centuries, a few women were able to enter the equestrian world thanks to the circus world, as riders. The first woman to start the great circus school was Caroline Loyo. Grace, artistry, and feminine features allowed some women to practise vaulting, but dressage was still practised by men. In the 19th century, Calamity James was the first woman to ride a horse astride, an equestrian practice that was forbidden to women until 1930 in France. It was following the various feminist movements of the suffragettes that this riding practice was authorised but was nevertheless regulated because it required the wearing of trousers.

During periods of war (World Wars I & II), things gradually began to change as women had to take on more male roles more frequently, for example by working in agriculture after their husbands left on the battlefield. However, women's access to the horse world varied considerably depending on their involvement in agriculture during wartime, whether or not women had to work in agriculture because their husbands went to war, and the rate of loss of men during wars. For example, in England and the Wales there were 8.7% more women than men in 1933 due to the losses of men in the wars (Hendenborg & Hendenborg White, 2012).

Even though women were allowed to work in the stables, grooming was not seen as a female activity as stable work is considered dirty and hard. In addition to this, the living conditions and salary of a groom girl were low. Because of all these constraints, the parents of these girls begged them to stop working as grooms. People working in the stables, on the other hand, reassured the parents that it was possible to make a decent living from a groom's job. Grooming was a highly demanded job by women who could not afford to own their own horse but wanted to interact and take care of them. However, the living conditions of these grooms are not always decent, and the pay is low. Their employers do not understand that taking care of horses is quite hard work and requires better pay and working conditions. On the other hand, some people believe that grooms should not be motivated by the salary, it is the experience with horses that counts above all. In fact, stable girls develop various skills through grooming and riding.

It was in the 1970s that middle-class women began to enter equestrian practices as riding became more democratic and open even to people with low incomes. In the 1970s, a "Poly Syndrome" phenomenon developed, which gives the reasons for the investment of women in the stables (Wikihorse, n.d.). "Women were indeed attracted by ponies, which they could pamper because they were less impressive than horses. As a result of this democratisation, the

equestrian world has been totally transformed, it is no longer reserved for men with power, nor is it only for the military domain, from now on it is “a sport and a connection with nature” (Wikihorse, n.d.). This evolution, strangely enough, was positively received by men. Around the year 2000, 75% of the riding population was made up of women (Wikihorse, n.d.).

2.3. The equestrian Olympic disciplines

This section deals with equestrian disciplines at Olympic level. Firstly, we will explain the origins of the Olympic equestrian games. Secondly, we will look at the beginnings of women’s participation in the games and how this has evolved by looking at the proportions of participation in the last two Olympic Games, Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020.

2.3.1. History of equestrian Olympic games

The origins of equestrian sports and the riding customs we know today come from militarism. For example, we ride on the left side of a horse and place the buckle of the reins on the right side because soldiers used to place their sword in a sheath on the left side to prevent the weapon from snagging when the soldier handled it. While the three disciplines: dressage, jumping and eventing were part of the “military tests” to judge the performance of soldiers on horseback.

However, the equestrian sports organised during the modern Olympic Games have their origins in the four-horse chariot racing organised during the Olympic Games in Ancient Greece since 680 BC in Olympia. The event consisted of 12 laps of the racecourse, or 14 km, with a chariot pulled by four horses. The winner was the one who came first in the last lap. The cart was open, the rider stood and conducted the horses with a whip. The event started with a signal once all the teams had entered the track. This sport was the most prestigious of all Olympic sports, but also very dangerous: the cart could fall over at any time due to the high speed in the bends or collisions with other participants. The athlete was not the owner of the horses and the cart, but was represented by a jockey, although he or she took all the glory for the victories. Four-horse chariot racing was an extremely complicated sport because the rider had to drive the four powerful horses alone in the middle of the race. As his strength was zero, he had to have a strong bond with his four horses to be obeyed. Besides chariot racing, there were other equestrian sports in the ancient period: two horse racing, horse racing without chariot, horseback acrobatics as well as military sports such as throwing javelins from horseback.

In June 1894, during a congress in Paris, a request was made for equestrian sports to be included in the Olympic Games. The Olympic horse-riding sport is composed of three disciplines: dressage, show jumping and eventing and began in 1900 in Paris. Immediately afterwards, equestrian sports disappeared but reappeared in 1912, at the Olympic Games in Stockholm. At first women were excluded from participating in the Olympic Games until 1948 and the riders were to be officers. However, this fact does not seem to be entirely true, as according to some sources, women were already competing in the early 1900. At the beginning of the official participation of both genders in the three equestrian disciplines (1952), there were more men than women, which seems to be the opposite today. Women could compete in “dressage from 1952, show jumping in 1956 and eventing from 1964” (Le Centre d’Etudes Olympiques, 2017).

2.3.2. Fe/male participation at the Olympics

At first, dressage has tended to be considered more feminine and consequently “dominated” by women since 1970 (Hedenborg & Hedenborg White, 2012) to their grace, femininity and flexibility, the highly skilled female participants were a better match for dressage than men who rode too strictly and rigidly (Hedenborg & Hedenborg White, 2012). According to Henri St Cyr, a Swedish gold medallist, “Women had become so talented at dressage that they should have their own courses” (Hedenborg & Hedenborg White, 2012). Taking these perceptions of dressage into account, the number of men entering the discipline has nevertheless increased considerably since 1992 (Hedenborg & Hedenborg White, 2012). The fact that dressage is perceived as a female discipline has again been socially formatted by society and the media, reinforcing the gender divide in the equestrian world instead of bringing it together. According to the analysis of the Rio 2016 Olympic dressage competition based on the list of dressage nominated entries in 2016 (FEI, 2016), there were 127 participants registered, of which most were female (65,35% of women compared to 34,65% of men). Countries such as South Africa, Russia, Switzerland, or Ukraine had no male athletes. Nevertheless, the number of men is higher in countries like Spain, Japan or Korea. We observe a large number of men but less than the number of women in countries such as Brazil (half of the female participants and half of the male participants), the Netherlands, New Zealand or Great Britain. The same type of analysis was carried out of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic dressage competition, except that it was based on the list of dressage nominated entries in 2021 (FEI, 2021). From this analysis we can see that dressage had 122 registered participants. The majority of the participants were also women (61.47% of women compared to 38,52% of men). In countries such as Australia,

Dominican Republic, Estonia, Chile, Ireland, Mexico, Republic of South Africa, Taiwan, Switzerland or Ukraine, the dressage riders were all women. Brazil is the only country that is composed of men only. While countries such as Spain, Finland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Morocco and Portugal had more male than female riders. Finally, we can observe in the following countries Austria, Belgium, France (equal number of male and female riders), Great Britain or Luxembourg (equal number of male and female riders), a large number of male riders even if it is not higher than the number of female riders.

Afterwards, show jumping is perceived as a male discipline, jumping originated in the military and hunting context, following the introduction of the Enclosure Acts in the 19th. This discipline “is a spectacular mix of courage, control and technical ability that requires the horse and the rider combination” (Olympics, n.d.). The course consists of obstacles with a height of between 1.40 m and 1.60 m and a maximum width of 2.2 m. These can be of different types: double or triple bars, water elements and false brick walls. According to the analysis of the Rio 2016 Olympics based on the list of jumping nominated entries in 2016 (FEI, 2016), show jumping as a discipline had 161 participants, of which most were men (79.51% male showjumpers compared to 20.49% female showjumpers). The countries with more female athletes than males, who participate in the Olympic Games in show jumping, were the USA or Taiwan. However, countries such as Argentina, Colombia, Egypt, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Peru, Qatar, Turkey, Uruguay, or Venezuela did not have any female athletes. According to the same analysis carried out on Tokyo 2020, based on the list of jumping nominated entries 2021 (FEI, 2021), the show jumping consisted of 180 participants. The majority of the participants were still men (81,12% of men compared to 18,88% of women). Countries like Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Jordan, Latvia, Morocco, Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, or Syria had only riders. While in the following countries, for example, Australia, Canada, Norway, Portugal, Sri Lanka, Taiwan or the USA, the number of women was higher than the number of men. Finally, we can observe that the following countries, China, Czech Republic, or Great Britain (the same number of women as men) have many female riders even if their number is not higher than the number of male riders.

Finally, eventing is associated with the male discipline. In the past, the purpose of this discipline was to evaluate soldiers and their horses against any challenge that might occur on or off duty and to ‘compare the levels of training between the cavalries of different countries’ (Olympics, n.d.). Cross country jumping evaluates the fitness and suitability of the rider.

“Dressage showcased skills from the parade ground and the jumping phases demonstrated speed and stamina” (FEI, 2018). According to the analysis of the Rio 2016 Olympic eventing competition, the women’s participation was substantially lower than men’s (37,7% of women compared to 62,3% of men from 122 registered participants). Countries such as Brazil, Chile, China, Ecuador, Spain, Finland, Japan, or Switzerland had no female athletes in this discipline. However, countries such as Canada, Great Britain, Puerto Rico, Sweden, the USA, or Zimbabwe have more women than men. Germany also has a high number of women, but this is still lower than the number of male participants. The same analysis carried out on Tokyo 2020, based on the list of eventing nominated entries in 2021 (FEI, 2021), shows that there were 146 registered participants in this discipline. The number of participants was always higher than the number of women (65,75% of men compared to 34,24% of women). The following countries: China, Czech Republic, Brazil, France, Hong Kong, India, and Russia had no female riders in this discipline. While the number of women was higher than the number of men in the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Canada, Great Britain, Puerto Rico, the Republic of South Africa, and Sweden. Finally, we can see that Denmark (equal number of men and women), Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, or Switzerland (have many female riders even though their number is not higher than the number of male and female riders).

In conclusion, it is noticeable that the proportion of women participating in the Olympic Games has decreased in all disciplines compared to the proportion of men participating. However, it is difficult to compare the evolution of the countries as more of them were able to qualify for the Tokyo Olympic Games due to a change in the selection rules. The aim of this change was to allow more countries to be represented in the equestrian disciplines.

2.4. Fe/male participation in non-Olympian equestrian disciplines

Firstly, horse racing is considered to be a male-dominated world with a low proportion of women because they were perceived as unsuitable for the sport due to their lack of strength ‘to push horses out’ and their bodies were too delicate and not adapted to the jockey position. The main reasons for female entering in horseracing were personnel in racing and the introduction of equal opportunities legislation in 1970. Women had to adopt masculine characteristics if they wanted to be tolerated in the equestrian world and hoped for a future development of their career as a jockey. They had to prove themselves by “being conscientious, hard-working and tough” (Butler, n.d.) to show that they had abilities as lads. Nevertheless, this

talk of side-lining women in the racing world is questionable. The body of a successful jockey should be small and light enough, which are traits that correspond to women, so their bodies seem to be more suitable for horse racing. Moreover, men also have sensitive organs that are prone to injury. Finally, women performed the same work as men in the stables, which proves that they have sufficient strength. These statements have not been picked up, which is why these statements only fuel discrimination against women.

To continue, rodeo has been a male domain since its inception. Its initial objective was to designate the best cowboy in the town or in the surrounding area (Panatal Escape, n.d.). Since 1990, women from different social classes and ages have participated in Brazilian and Western rodeo courses. Currently, during Western and Brazilian competitions, women and men compete in separate categories, as opposed to other equestrian disciplines. This class separation during the competitions favoured the integration of women in rodeos and increased the number of women's participation in courses where women can demonstrate their technical skills, which are sometimes better than those of men. Although there is a large presence of women in rodeo courses, it is still a strictly male-dominated environment and women are minor players.

Finally, vaulting is an equestrian sport combined with the theatre that relies on elegance and choreography. During vaulting competitions, women and men compete in separate categories, so there are competitions specifically for men and women. However, there are 'peer' courses (2 men, 2 women and 1 man and 1 woman) (and teams of 6 athletes of both sexes, where women and men compete together) (New York Times, 2018). Even though, none of the writing in the literature review confirms that vaulting is a female-dominated discipline, nor do they address gender-equal opportunities in equestrian vaulting, we believe that the number of women prevails. According to the trainer and president of the ASVEF (Association Sportive de Voltige Équestre française), the qualities of an excellent trick rider are to establish a strong bond with his horse, to be supple and strong, acrobatic, and dancing. As we have seen this discipline is similar to dressage and these cited qualities correspond more to women than to men.

2.5. Gender (in)equality in show jumping

Today's equestrian sports, and especially show jumping, are one of the only sports that allow women to compete in the same courses as men. The results therefore appear in the same ranking (Olympics. n.d.). Through this section, we will observe whether women have the same opportunities in show jumping.

2.5.1. The role of biological (sex) differences and socialisation (gender) differences in show jumping

Currently, the equestrian world has gradually become more democratic and is no longer reserved only for the men from the high society. In equestrian sports at the Olympic level, men and women have been competing together at the same level and under the same criteria without distinction of gender, for more than 60 years (Dashper, 2012.). However, it is clear that the two genders do not have entirely the same physical and mental capacities. We will now look at this.

Firstly, we will focus on physical capabilities. Jollien (2016) noted some differences. First of all, a woman's muscle mass is smaller than that of a man. For a woman, it constitutes about 28% of her total mass, whereas for a man, it represents 35%. This difference is due to the amount of testosterone produced and affects physical strength. Having less muscle mass causes a woman to have less strength. In addition, women have fatter tissue than men. This represents between 20 and 25% of the total mass of women compared to 15 to 20% in men. Another difference between male and female is the cardiac capacity. The heart muscle is on average 30% smaller in women than in men. The blood volume is also 10 to 15% lower. The haemoglobin level is lower as well. The link between these three characteristics leads to a lower cardiac capacity and less oxygenation. A woman's heart rate must therefore be higher than a man to meet the same needs. Moreover, the oxygen consumption is different. A man's body consumes and stores oxygen better than a woman. This leads to a lower physical resistance. Another point to note is the flexibility of the ligaments which is superior to women. She is therefore more flexible than the man in terms of her joints.

Secondly, we will discuss psychological differences that are not in fact totally existing (Jolien, 2016). Actually, only a greater sensitivity can be noted on the female side with a better capacity of introspection and expression of emotions. In the article, it is also noted that this gives them an advantage in horse riding because what is most important is the relationship with the horse and not the physical aspect.

Throughout history, men have tended to use the horse as a tool whether for work, for transport, or for sport. Their relationship was therefore based on submission and domination of the equine. The arrival of women in the equestrian world has broken this traditional method in order to use the method based on carrying in which the so-called feminine qualities, such as

encouragement, tenderness and patience prevail (Birke & Brandt, 2009) (Maj, 2008). The work is therefore adapted to the horse's point of view (Maj, 2008).

Women and men still share different interests in the integration of the equestrian world. Generally speaking, men see riding as the development of a sport and their performance, they are not involved in the horse's care, grooming, cuddling, working in the stables, which is the opposite of women. The aim of these women is not only to ride and perform on the back of a horse, but also to be more involved in the stable as well as giving importance to the social aspect and the "caring" part: any task is good to do in the stable as long as they can spend time with the horses. Spending so much time in the stables allows them to develop a sense of community with each other where they help each other and share their knowledge about horses. They value ethology and working on foot, which allows them to develop a relationship similar to that with pets such as dogs and cats. According to them, grooming is a moment of intimacy with the horse, and they adopt the role of mothers when they are grooming the horse. The relationship between the horse and the woman is based on a 'love' relationship which includes feelings such as passion, jealousy, and love. However, this relationship tends to be "one-sided" as women riders love their horses without expecting love from them in return.

As we have seen previously in the research, this sense of caring is present in women which is less present in men. In training horses, they use the same skills that they use in interacting with their children and their partner. Women also tend to be more involved in movements and organisations that fight animal abuse and promote animal welfare as well as studying veterinary medicine. While men tend to be more solitary and see the horse as a performance tool. Their primary motivation is to be able to progress in equestrian sport and to win competitions. They are attracted to an environment where they can take risks and experience a sense of adrenaline, excitement, and toughness (Plymoth, 2013). According to Adelman, M. & Thompson (n.d.), "The cross-country riding phase of eventing was riskier than motorbike riding" (Adelman & Thompson, n.d.).

Through this theme, we observe that the genders have totally divergent interests in their involvement in the equestrian world. Above all, men seek performance in equestrian sport, whereas women consider the equestrian environment to be a source of leisure and conviviality. This may be part of the reason why men predominate in top level jumping. However, this should not be taken as an absolute truth: some men like to spend time with their horses and get involved in the equestrian world as well as many female riders like to perform and compete in sports at the highest level. This can be confirmed by the following sentence: "Girls and women are

certainly competitive and are exalted by a fast canter, jumping, riding western and even playing knights” (Plymoth, 2013). The involvement of a horse girl is not only limited to grooming and kissing her horse, but much more than that, as we will see in the description of a horse girl later in the research.

2.5.2. Successful women in show jumping

Those women are not absent from the highest ranks in show jumping is proven by a small number of role models. Here we present four women who are generally well known in the ‘horsey’ community:

Table 1. Four well-known female showjumpers

Picture A – Pénélope Leprevost	Picture B – Alexandra Ledermann
 Moseigne, H. (2015). Flora en forme au CSI 5* d'Hickstead. http://www.penelope-leprevost.com/# 2008 Enter in the world top 10 in show jumping 2010 World Vice-Champion in Lexington 2014 World Vice-Champion in the team in Caen 2014 2nd Place in the World Cup Final in Las Vegas 2016 Gold Medal by the team at the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro	 https://www.hippomundo.com/en/news/alexandra-ledermann-deel-1 1996 Bronze medals at Olympic Games in Atlanta 1999 First woman as European Champion in Hickstead

Picture C – Edwina Tops-Alexander



<https://www.sportbusinessmag.com/equitation/une-nouvelle-recrue-pour-edwina-tops-alexander/>

2011 Champion of the overall ranking of the Longines Global Champions Tour

2012 Champion of the overall ranking of the Longines Global Champions Tour

2018 Champion in the Super Grand Prix in Prague

2021 42nd in the world ranking

First rider who reached 1 million euros in the Longines Global Champions Tour

Picture D – Beezie Madden



<https://www.lequimag.be/actualite/beezie-madden-dans-le-bon-rythme-%C3%A0-paris>

2003 Gold Medal by the team at Panamerican Games

2004 Gold Medal by the team at Olympic Games in Athens

2013 Winner of the 2012–2013 World Cup Jumping Final in Gothenburg

2018 Winner of the 2017–2018 World Cup Jumping Final in Paris

Picture E – **Malin Baryard-Johnsson**

<http://www.dyon.be/fr/cso/150-malin-baryard-johnsson.html>

2003 3rd Place in the World Cup Jumping Final in Las Vegas

2004 Silver medal by a team at the Olympic Games of Rio

2021 5th Place at the 5* Grand Prix in Valkenswaard

2020 5th Place in individual at the Olympic Games in Tokyo

Picture F – **Jessica Springsteen**

<https://www.nj.com/entertainment/2021/07/jessica-springsteen-daughter-of-bruce-is-headed-to-the-olympics.html>

2009 1st Place in WEF Excellence in Equitation Championship

2010 Silver and bronze medals at the North American Youth Championships

2019 1st place at the CSI4* Sweden H&M Grand Prix

2019 1st place in Longines Global Champions Tour and Prix of Ramatuelle/Saint-Tropez, France

2021 5th Place in Rolex Grand Prix CSI5*

2.5.3. Persisting mechanisms of gender inequality in show jumping

Previously, in our research we have seen that men and women compete together at the top level of equestrian sports. Does this gender integration mean that women are not discriminated against anymore? This is what we will see in this part of our research.

Despite the willingness to provide equal opportunities for both genders, women face many problems in breaking through and developing their careers because of various barriers, especially in jumping at the highest level. To develop a career in show jumping at the top level, talent and hard work are not enough. It is necessary to have contact with influential people from the equestrian world and financial means. Even if the equestrian world is more accessible than before, it is still an area that is particularly reserved for people from high society. Other elements

that complicate career developments of inexperienced young female riders are the underestimation by gatekeepers and media, the harassment, the low income as well as having a family.

2.5.3.1. *Underestimation of women riders by media and gatekeepers*

People who do not come from an influential and wealthy family and who want to develop their career in show jumping at Olympic level must be spotted by gatekeepers such as horse owners, trainers, sponsors as well as the media. The most fortunate owners play a considerable role in the development of the careers of top riders because they own the best horses that are used for competitions. As a result, women from the middle and lower classes are disadvantaged because most often it is men who are passed on by the gatekeepers. As we have seen previously, sport is a masculinised field, men embody strength as well as performance. Women have to fight battles to be spotted by gatekeepers and constantly suffer from the hostility and ambivalence of the media. They are confronted by a glass ceiling to develop their career in the equestrian world at the top level. High-performing men with no financial means are not confronted with this kind of situation. Moreover, being a man in a female-dominated field helps them to stand out and overcome the selection criteria. However, in male-dominated fields women do not have this advantage. On the contrary, they are underestimated and constantly belittled.

The reason why women are more invisible than men in the world of high-level equestrianism is, on the one hand, they do not have enough self-confidence, and, on the other hand, they tend to handle their emotions less well than men. Both in the way they express themselves, “I wish that ..., my dream would be ..., if I were picked...” and in the low level of objectives they set themselves. In her article, Coulter (n.d.) explains that Grand Prix female riders of all ages confided about the considerable effort they had to manage and suppress the emotions of “nervousness, inadequacy, anxiety and self-doubt” during courses.

As a result, the gatekeepers therefore have the impression that it is the men who perform better and that the women are not ambitious and talented enough. According to the men, “the success relates to the push himself/herself forward and to state clearly and overly that the person wants to ride at the elite level” (Dashper, 2012). That said, one way for women to stand out is to improve “their confidence in their abilities and willingness to push themselves forward, further exacerbating male advantage” (Dashper, 2012). Moreover, all the riders confirm that emotions and high-level jumping competitions do not go hand in hand, so they must learn to

manage their feelings. Nevertheless, the belief that women do not have enough capacity in the equestrian world leads to a vicious circle: their lack of self-confidence and negative feelings are reinforced, and this phenomenon has an impact on their performance.

The sportswomen are perceived differently from sportsmen by the media. The media still tends to promote a traditional image of a female rider, associating her “to images of motherhood, glamour and carrying for their horses” (Plymoth, 2012). The two images of “traditional” and “less traditional” women come into competition. The media under-represents women and a few minor representations of women riders in the media tend to sexualise them and highlight their femininity to point out gender differences. For example, Swedish rider Helena Lundback, who won the 2002 World Championship, says that the media has focused on her great success “as a woman” and not as a rider. The representation of this Champion in the high-level equestrian world is built on the basis of a glamorous star. Newspapers will never portray images of tomboys or women wearing dirty clothes that represent real life. On the contrary, they are portrayed as attractive and beautiful women who advertise clothing or other equestrian products. However, in reality, these sports women are also normal women who are successful. This shows that the media manipulate us by creating a false representation of the image of women.

For all the above reasons, women riders find it more difficult to develop their careers than men riders.

2.5.3.2. Harassment

Harassment, and in particular sexual harassment, is well established in equestrian sports. From a very young age, several harassments can be identified, experienced by both girls and boys, often by people in a position of power such as trainers. However, the problem in this sport is the difficulty of talking about aggression. As a matter of fact, the testimony mentioned in Y. Ravier’s article (2021) explains that aggression can be presented as something usual in the milieu, which should not be talked about. To avoid this type of abuse, some countries have codes of conduct for coaches. This is the case in Ireland (Ravier, 2021), which has legislation explicitly stating that touching or talking to students in a provocative manner is prohibited. Since 2019, the International Federation for Equestrian Sports, assisted by the Olympic Equestrian Committee, has also written an annexe to its rules to address abuse and harassment.

2.5.3.3. *Having a family*

Having a family is another considerable barrier to the development of women's professional riding career. On the one hand, women are responsible for the household and the upbringing of children, and, on the other hand, they get pregnant. For this reason, female riders compete at Grand Prix level as they will have to give up training, competition and therefore income generation for at least nine months and then reduce them sharply because of the education of their children. High performance equestrian sport is male specific and thus requires a break from training and competition. Nevertheless, if an athlete takes a break from equestrian sport, his or her career will be set back by the loss of international ranking points.

In addition, professional women riders encounter difficulties to establish a solid, long-term relationship with a partner who does not come from the equestrian world. People who are not involved with horses cannot understand the amount of time that needs to be spent on the care and riding of horses. Because of the frequent absence of their rider partner, they feel lonely, neglected and/or jealous and therefore cannot invest themselves in this kind of relationship.

Therefore, women who succeed to develop their career in the equestrian world, do not fit into the social "framework" and risk paying a high cost for their choice: being alone without a partner and children. The same fate is not reserved for men; they have more freedom and can continue to develop their career as a top rider while having a family life.

2.5.3.4. *Other gender stereotypes that prevent equality*

The "horse girl" is seen as a woman with a strong character and tenacity who fights to achieve her goals in high-level sport. To succeed in top-level equestrian sports, a horse girl must adopt different aspects of "sports' ethics" which includes "drive, determination, competitiveness & singled mindedness" (Dashper, 2009). She takes a lot of time so she learns "to plan, to take responsibility, to be brave, to cooperate" (Plymoth, 2012), and know "that there is no obstacle that is too high to think about how to earn money, take care of her home and be a loving wife and mother (if her goal is to have a family)" (Plymoth, 2012). To pursue, to survive and to stand out in a male-dominated environment, a horse girl must demonstrate a sense of detachment so as not to lose sight of her goal and, above all, not be overwhelmed by ill-intentioned comments about her. For example, on the day of the competition, she needs to focus on the preparation of the competition, she is serious and cold.

For this reason, are witnessing the masculinisation of women who embody the following qualities: “independence, strength, courage, competitive instincts & decision-making ability and leadership skills” (Plymoth, 2012) that are the features of hegemonic masculinity i.e., “a cultural norm that continually leads men to power and economic achievement” (Eige. Europa, 1995). Furthermore, a woman working with horses must also be physically strong and be prepared to get dirty: working in a stable requires carrying heavy things (big buckets, hay bales, etc.), knowing how to handle and manage a heavy horse and driving trucks. From an early age, they are confronted with the harshness of the equestrian world. For example, if a horse fell, they had to get back on the horse immediately and not cry. Women riders spend a lot of time working outside, so the sun, wind and rain can make their hands and faces curdle, and their clothes can get worn and dirty.

The horse girl no longer corresponds to the classic femininity and who opposes ‘of the caring horse girl femininity’ (Plymoth, 2012). This does not please society and for men. As a result, the horse girl is marginalised, labelled ‘bitchy’ (because of her strong character), lesbian and tomboy.

Even though the equestrian world is associated with women, the tradition of the culture of the stable is still based on masculinity as equestrian sports are still dominated by men. It is difficult to explain concretely why show jumping and eventing is dominated by men as opposed to dressage when the majority of the population is female and fully accepts femininity. One of the reasons that has been given is that show jumping was very profitable economically and men tend to be predominant in commercial circles and eventing was considered too dangerous for women. However, there are still more women in the evening than in show jumping.

2.6. Conclusion and implications

Our master thesis focuses on “*An investigation of the experience of equal chances of female horse riders competing in mixed show jumping competition*”. Through the literature review, we found that women and men compete at the same level and in the same courses. These favours attributing the same opportunities for both genders, especially women in sports. However, following an in-depth research, we observed that this equal opportunity granted to the genders is just theoretical, the reality is totally different: men continue to be favoured and women have to face many obstacles, preventing them from developing their riding career in high-level show jumping.

We have seen that throughout history riding, owning and caring for horses was a purely male activity. Horses accompanied men at work, in the military context, served as transport or were simply used for hunting and sport. Owning a horse was a sign of wealth and power, so they were reserved for wealthy men from high society. A real man could ride and own good horses. As a sign of power, the horse favoured the emancipation of women, so men restricted women's access to horses. For example, men say that taking care of a horse is a difficult and dirty job, so it should not be done by a woman. Or making women dependent on them to get on or off the horse, as riding astride a horse was forbidden for women.

Nowadays, riding and caring for horses has become more and more democratic and accessible to people, especially women from the middle and lower classes. It is possible to take riding lessons in many equestrian centres. Therefore, it is no longer necessary to have land and stables to be in contact with the horse.

The equestrian world is feminised, a larger proportion of licence holders are women and at amateur level there are more female riders than males. However, in the high-level equestrian world, and more specifically in show jumping competitions, a larger majority of riders are men. We have observed through our research that women favour contact, the development of the relationship with the horse and place less importance on the competitive aspect. Whereas for men they consider horse riding as a real sport and pay little attention to the horse as a living being. Nevertheless, we have seen that this is not always true: many female riders want to develop their career at high level jumping but they are faced with many constraints. According to the literature review, women are underestimated by the media, sponsors, and the owners of top horses. According to these gatekeepers, women are not ambitious enough, they do not set high enough goals, they are afraid to take risks and they have difficulties managing their emotions. However, this is not a reality as there are no mental differences that can be identified although there are clearly physical differences that disadvantage women in sport.

To continue, women must make sacrifices if they want to develop their career as a high-level show jumping rider and at the same time have a family life and be a mother. Since the world of high-level riding requires rigour and almost constant presence with the horse, combining the two aspects is impossible without the support of family and friends. Even with the necessary support, these women will never be fully focused on both areas. A choice must therefore be made. Furthermore, they risk becoming single all the time if their partner is not from the equestrian world, as this pace of life will not suit him or her, or simply out of jealousy

of the time given to the horse. As we have seen previously, this problem does not concern men who have natural freedom.

To conclude, in the current equestrian world, including high-level show jumping, women and men compete together at the same level and in the same courses, yet women continue to be marginalised and subordinated by men. So, we cannot say that this is true gender equality in equestrian sports. Nevertheless, gender mainstreaming in equestrian sports is a considerable step towards establishing gender equality in the high-performance sports environment.

3. Methodology

In order to write our master's thesis on the theme of gender (in)equality in the equestrian world, we used the qualitative method to explain the distinction between men and women in the equestrian sports.

First of all, we carried out a literature review in order to inform ourselves about the subject and what has been done before. This enabled us to deepen our knowledge on the subject. We have started by reading multiple and various scientific articles and books. We were first interested in articles about gender differences in society in general. Then we focused on the creation and history of equestrian disciplines. Afterwards, we analysed more in depth the differences between men and women within the equestrian world and more specifically, the show jumping at the highest level. We were also interested in the relationship between men and horses. We noted that men and women do not have the same place in equestrian sports.

Afterwards, our master thesis focuses on: *“An investigation of the experience of equal chances of female horse riders competing in mixed show jumping competition”*. Through this research, we realised that there was a smaller percentage of women than men in this field and we would like to understand why and how the legitimization of women at the same level as men has been achieved. Furthermore, it has been reported that dressage is more feminised than jumping, so we have tried to understand this difference. Moreover, as men and women are not configured in the same way, we want to understand how morphology and physique can influence performance at top level jumping. In addition, we wanted to look at the psychological side that can have an impact on what people are capable or not capable of doing. Finally, we wanted to discuss access as well as obstacles to the riding profession as a woman in order to understand the differences there can occur.

To pursue, we created a semi-directive interview guide which enabled us to seek information on the subject of riders. The rider is the people who train horses or/and go to the show. He could be an employee or a freelancer. This salary depends on the results in competition and/or the horses' sales. In 2017 in France, there were 3200 riders with a professional competition licence. We chose to interview them in order to analyse their vision of their position in the horse world and to share their knowledge of it. We also find information from other professionals in the equestrian world. We talked with equine osteopaths and physiotherapists who are part of the horse health professionals. They are important for the maintenance of the horses, and they have their health in their hands. We wanted to discuss with

them the impact of gender on the horse and to understand their opinion on the current functioning of competitions. We also talked with breeders and owners/sellers. The main difference between these two types of people is that the breeder is the person who will give birth to foals in order to develop them and, after, market them or bring them to the top level. In 2016, there were 14,501 saddle horses and ponies' breeders in France. We wanted to discuss with them their choice of riders and to see their vision of the equestrian world and gender performance. Finally, we talked with representatives of equestrian equipment to better understand the differences in adaptation according to sex, according to gender and stable managers to have a more global vision of the horse market and the equestrian world through their position. We have selected them in order to obtain a diversified and representative point of view of the greatest number concerning the performances of men and women in high level jumping. We interviewed 32 people in order to have a better view of the situation of gender segregation in the equestrian world. We contacted them by going directly to the field or by video conference. The interviews are strictly anonymous in order to respect the ethics of the Louvain School of Management; thus, we gave a nickname to each of the speakers. The table below illustrates all our respondents:

	Surname	Age (years)	Profession	Duration (minutes)
1	Circee	59	Jumping and dressage rider, coach and stable manager National level	52,37
2	Lisa	20	Rider and coach International level, 120 cm	39,06
3	Marthe	22	Rider and coach	54,05
4	Russel	63	Sports horses breeder	13,12
5	Estelle	24	Jumping rider and coach National and International level	25,31

6	Hortense	30	Equine physiotherapist	15,16
7	Laure	27	Sales representative for CWD saddlery	35,38
8	Laurie	29	Jumping rider and breeder National and International level	37,43
9	Hermine	39	Rider and coach Complete National	45, 47
10	Marie	21	Jumping rider and coach National 130 cm level	42,25
11	Arnaud	42	Jumping rider International 4* 150/155 cm level	32,19
12	Eralys	20	Jumping rider 140 cm level	60
13	Antonin	18	Jumping rider 145 cm level, International	70
14	Elise	30	Animal osteopath (horses and dogs)	28,21
15	Clémence	56	Stable Manager	36,44
16	Loïc	59	Jumping rider National level	25,54
17	Floriane	59	Breeder	28,09
18	Clara	31	Jumping rider International level	39,00
19	Françoise	49	Jumping rider	100

			135 cm level	
20	Geoffroy	60	Eventing rider Olympic level	34,50
21	Sarah	23	Eventing Rider International 2* level	21,41
22	Larissa	41	Dressage Rider International Grand Prix	40,53
23	Emilie	23	Jumping rider International 150 cm level	51,38
24	Constance	50	Stable manager	19,31
25	Lola	24	Jumping rider International level	32,14
26	Igor	27	Saddler	60
27	Bernard	29	Jumping international 2*-3*, young horses	39
28	Véronique	52	Dressage national	73
29	Lindsay	31	Jumping national	23,45
30	Franck	40–45	Jumping international 4*	+/- 150 second part of the interview is lost
31	Sophie	29	Jumping rider International 145/150 cm level	33,12
32	Anais	28	Jumping rider regional/national/international	60

The table shows that the number of women interviewed is higher than the number of men. The main reason for the over-representation of women was that they were more willing to spend time on our interview. The age of the interviewees ranged from 20 to 63 years. However, the majority of our respondents are under 30 years old. Most of them were friendly and expressed themselves clearly about their knowledge and feelings regarding the equestrian world. However, some respondents answered briefly to the questions, so we had to ask them to develop their statements in order to understand their ideas in depth.

Our semi-structured interviews were divided into 3 categories: interviews with female riders, interviews with male riders and interviews with other equestrian professionals. The interviews started with warm up questions and then moved on to more specific questions about gender differences in high levels show jumping. The length of the interviews varied from speaker to speaker; the shortest interview lasted about 13, 12 minutes while the longest lasted 2 hours and 30 minutes. The interviews with the riders consisted of 5 different parts (1) Nature of work, (2) Passion for horses (3) Work-life balance (4) Human/horse relationship as well as (5) Gender differences in high-level show jumping. Whereas the interviews with the other equestrian professionals only included two parts: (1) Nature of work and (2) Gender differences in high-level show jumping. The interviews with the riders were more detailed in order to obtain their view of their habits, preferences and place in the equestrian world, as completely as possible.

To analyse our results, we decided to look at gender norms and gender (in) equality. To do so, we asked the following two sub-questions: “*Which gender norms are prevalent in show jumping?*” and “*How do equine professionals perceive gender integration in show jumping?*”. To address this, we have created specific subthemes to detail our analysis: gender norms and gender segregation. With regard to gender norms, we have chosen to analyse physical and psychological traits, family aspect, type of horses ridden, adaptability of riding equipment and riding association, all according to gender. In addition, we analysed the traits of masculinity and femininity that riders wish to develop, maintain, or hide. Concerning gender segregation, the sub-themes of analysis are the proportion of gender participation, the opinion on gender mix and the performance of male and female riders and their ability to compete at a high level. In addition, we have addressed the discrimination and consideration that women may experience in jumping. We also examined access to necessary resources such as money, sponsorship, media exposure and horses. Finally, we drew important currents which we justified with the help of the verbatim interviews.

Once the analysis part was done, we confront the theoretical framework with the empirical one in order to verify if the theoretical aspects correspond with those in real life as well as to deepen some statements or to point out the divergences. Once this is completed, we quote the limitations we were confronted during the writing of our research. Then we propose solutions to the main problems encountered. Finally, we suggest topics to be expanded in future studies.

Despite the methodical and rigorous collections as well as analysis of the data, some limitations are immersed in our study. Firstly, the interviews were conducted in French as this is the language that the respondents are most familiar with. Our master's thesis is written in English, for this reason the interviews were translated. The meaning of the ideas of our respondents may, thus slightly differ. Nevertheless, we have done our best to consider their initial points of view. Subsequently, the interviews were transcribed, some passages were not understood, or the meaning of the sentences was not clear, so we had to interpret the meaning of some of the speakers' statements despite these misunderstandings. However, our interpretation is more diversified as we are two students working on this thesis. Thirdly, the respondents were talking about their own insight and feelings about the equestrian world. As a result, their views are subjective and do not represent the reality experienced by other riders and equestrian professionals. To overcome this problem, it was important to have a large enough sample to compare the statements of the interviewees in order to observe the trends that emerge. Finally, the 32 interviews we conducted do not represent the reality of high-level show jumping, especially as most of the interviewees are women. Nevertheless, it allows us to have a first point of view concerning the high-level equestrian world.

4. Data analysis

4.1. Which gender norms are prevalent in show jumping?

In our analysis, we want to analyse the gender norms present in show jumping in order to answer the question: “*Which gender norms are prevalent in show jumping?*” We would like to take an overview of the current standards in the field to analyse the acceptance of women. To do that, we analysed information about the association of riding with gender, the physical and psychological traits of men and women as well as the horses and equipment chosen by them, the family aspect and the speakers’ perception of these norms.

Firstly, according to some interviewees, the equestrian world is perceived as purely feminine because there are more women than men in riding schools, most riding schools are run by women and most equestrian licensees are women. Other speakers associate the equestrian world with both genders: the amateur level is viewed as more feminine, and the professional world is perceived as more masculine. Given this second statement, it would be biased to consider that the equestrian world is purely female. Here are two extracts from interviews that confirm these statements:

I associate it with a female or male environment in fact. Because, whether it is in the stables, at competitions or whatever, in fact, for me, we will always come across as many men as women. And... At any level or whatever, in fact, there will always be men or women. –

Equine physiotherapist, woman.

Well, obviously more to the woman, since I have a daughter. [...] And moreover, except in very high levels, there are always more women in the riding schools than men. –

Stable manager, woman.

The equestrian world can therefore be considered as mixed in its entirety. However, in leisure activities, it is clearly qualified as feminine. This perception can be explained by various factors, including the representations that people have of women and men. This is what we will develop below.

Secondly, to understand this gendered association, it is important to point out the main differences between male and female. As a matter of fact, in various interviews, a number of differences were noted. These are based on the biological aspect, the difference between women

and men in terms of their respective bodies, the psychological aspect, but also the cultural aspect, based on the definition of the female and male gender.

When it comes to physical aspects, strength was a recurrent topic during the interviews and was discussed several times. Various opinions can be found on this subject. According to interviewees, the idea that women have about men is that they are strong enough to ride a horse. Men are said to be stronger than women, which allows them to handle certain types of horses better. Here is an example from one of our interviews that confirm this statement:

I always thought that men... It is a general rule, they ride better than women because they are stronger. There are men's horses and women's horses, as they always say. This is a girl's horse because it is easy, it does not need too many legs, it does not need too many hands. That is, it, he will do his job. But there are many more men's horses that are not so easy. You need more legs, more hands. You do not have to be tired because you have a man's horse. For me, riders ride better. Now, there are women riders who are very good, but I think they have to find their horses more. – Jumping rider, woman.

However, there are conflicting views on this issue. A large number of riders think that feeling is more important than strength. This feeling is totally independent of gender and sex, it is unique to the individual. Although a man can be described as tougher, he can also have a very strong feeling and be quite sensitive on horseback, like a woman. It is also noted that every man who rides a horse must have a feminine side that allows him to have the necessary sensitivity. Here are two examples from the interviews that support these assertions:

Yes, no, in terms of the difference a little bit it depends, it is a question of feeling, everyone has a very different feeling, whether you are a man or a woman, I think that at that level, I will say, there are, there are men who will ride hard as women will want to ride hard. Men who will want to ride more gently, very much in tune with the horse and women as well.

I mean, from the outside, I have seen men riding with strength more often than women in general, but otherwise, yes, there are often differences. There are often differences, yes. –

Representative of a saddlery brand, woman.

A rider always has a very feminine side. And you can see that. People who ride a bit thin, who have a lot of feelings. We are all hypersensitive in fact, somewhere. It is our hypersensitivity. So, our feminine side is somewhat revealed, 7 cases out of 10 in broad daylight. The other three cases, the hormones... Somehow, it is very easy to distinguish the

two parts. Those who assume their more feminine side and the others, very masculine. You can see it very clearly in the way the horses are groomed, in their equipment, their lifestyle, their silhouette. It is quite easy to tell the difference, people are quite comfortable with it. –

Jumping rider, man.

Although feeling is more important than strength, it can be noted that the characteristics of men and women influence the type of horses they ride respectively: a general pattern can be identified. Women tend to ride horses that are more sensitive, finer, and smaller in physique as they have less strength. Whereas a man would prefer to ride big, strong, wide, and heavy horses with which one needs to have more strength in both legs and arms. You also have to be taller. Riding is therefore not the same for men and women. Here are three quotes to support these statements:

I would say that horses ridden by women would be more sensitive than those ridden by men because obviously a woman has less strength, and the aids are going to be much finer and so they are much finer [...]. – Jumping rider, woman.

There is a difference. Generally, women will ride more light horses, in the blood. Whereas men will ride more heavy horses. Now a heavy horse can be ridden by a woman. All horses are different, all humans are different. But I find that yes, there is a selection of horses for men and for women. – Eventing rider, woman.

A woman will normally ride more finesse, a man will ride more strength. Now, the thing is that horses that are more conducive to being ridden by women and horses that are more conducive to being ridden by men, so and if you interchange, for example, a man riding a horse that is more conducive to women, it could be a disaster. And vice versa, um, so um, I do not think men are especially stronger in, in, in equestrian sport, I think that I do not really know why, there are more men towards the top level and the difference in that. – Jumping rider, woman.

Nevertheless, as we can observe below, some believe that horses adapt to their riders and are therefore fit to be ridden by approximately everyone. If the horse is ridden hard by a rider, he tends to demand more strength and it would then be complicated to manage this type of horse by a woman, who is more delicate. Conversely, a horse that is ridden gently would be stressed if ridden by force. Here is an extract from an interview explaining this idea:

Oh yes, because, again, men have more strength, so men's horses are often a bit more... They adapt to their rider and so they themselves have a harder mouth; they are less delicate. Women's horses are a bit more delicate because they are ridden with less strength. –

Jumping rider, woman.

It is also understandable that it is important to choose horses that are suitable for the rider. This topic will also be discussed with regard to the vision of horse owners later on.

Meanwhile, the level of strength or softness will depend on a person's personality and physique. So, it is not gender specific. For example, a man may ride more gently than a woman. Here are two examples from our interviews explaining this idea:

A type of horse does not depend on the gender of the rider but rather on his morphology or his way of riding. – Breeder, man.

I think there are women who have a lot of strength and can put as much strength as a man. So, when you get on it, you are going to feel the same feeling as if it was a man. –

Jumping rider, woman.

The norm of women being less strong is not therefore proven in this sample of speakers. It can be noted, in fact, that, according to them, women can be as strong as men and have the same physical capacities in terms of riding. The feeling is more important than the physical aspect. Moreover, the horse does not need strength to be ridden properly.

To pursue, in connection with the physical traits of riders, we can identify gender differences in equestrian equipment which are identified by the preferences of each rider (tastes, colours, etc.) and the adaptation of the equipment to the riders' morphology. Generally speaking, female riders prefer to use a nice piece of equipment that will be fashionable and that will make her look good, whereas male riders will need equipment that will be more useful and comfortable. For example, they will look for trousers that are more flexible around their genital area. The differences are therefore similar to the way the genders dress in everyday life. This can be illustrated by the statements of the three women jumping riders:

[...] And how is the equestrian equipment gender-specific? [...] I think it is suitable for both at the same time. But I think women prefer to have nicer equipment. –

Jumping rider,
woman.

[...] Well, the equipment is identical, we have the same saddles, it is true that some, um, some brands make 'ladies' saddles. That is, it. [...] That is just [...] marketing mostly, that is marketing. After saying that it changes, yeah, for me it is not really, for me it is the same thing. There is not much that changes. The design, you can put a little colour on it, otherwise uh, for me everything is ..., everything is the same. The pairs of gaiters are the same, well the bombs are with rhinestones for us women and not for the men. So that is how it is, in everyday life too. I have a headband; now that has rhinestones, so my boyfriend is not going to wear a headband with rhinestones. – Jumping rider, woman.

[...] Do you know how the equestrian equipment is adapted to each gender? [...] No, it is for convenience, like men have a tie and women, have a collar. [...] It is just, even the trousers, they have, come on, they put, it is like jeans, they have more room for their willy but um, apart from that, no. It is the same thing. – Jumping rider, woman.

The professional riders' saddles, the most important equipment for effective riding, are customised for each rider based on their morphological characteristics and the horse's back. The aim is to ensure optimum comfort for both rider and horse, as well as to allow the rider to use his physical performance to the full. There are no saddles specifically designed for men and women. Here is the statement of a sales representative we interviewed who confirms these words:

So, we adapt, in fact, the equestrian equipment, often it is by the request of the riders, so we will rather manage, for example for the female morphology, we will be able to come up with a saddle which will really fulfil all the physical criteria of the woman because we have physiques which are completely different from the men, without speaking about corpulence but speaking about morphology and skeleton. You have to know that women's pelvis is wider, that the ischia's are not in the same place for a man as for a woman, because we have a more X-shaped knee, so the ischia's are wider and the ischia's in men are much, much closer together, so we do not have the same comfort in terms of sitting, so, yes, we can adapt according to the morphology, here are certain types of seats, in fact, more adapted to women.

- Sales representative for a saddler, woman.

Equestrian equipment has been adapted to the morphology of men and women. However, the aspect of tailoring to the individual is more important than presenting certain equipment purely for women or men. The equipment has also been adapted to suit the tastes of

the norm citing women as preferring colours such as pink or mauve and more designer clothing with rhinestones, for example.

Now, we will discuss the psychological aspects which are very important according to the respondents. It was found that men have a greater aptitude for horse riding and more specifically for high-level jumping. They are represented as more careerists and therefore more adapted to competition. In addition, their mental state is said to be better and stronger, which allows them to be more efficient and more reactive in case of encountered problems.

Because it is still like that in a lot of people's heads, that men have it easier to do big "completions" or something like that. – Jumping rider, woman.

Maybe in the mind. But, because it is true that, it is a job, you must be mentally strong because it is a difficult job. There are a lot of problems to deal with. But I do not think that there is a sporting difference in any case. – Jumping rider, man.

Conversely, the typical traits of women that emerged from the interviews are elegance, sensitivity, less resistance to pressure, lightness, patience, willingness to take care of others as well as women riders ride with finesse. These qualities are necessary in dressage competitions, as a result there will be more women than men in dressage competitions. Dressage is also seen as an artistic discipline that requires a touch of creativity, which is more often of interest to women than men. Here are three extracts from the interviews that confirm this statement:

What is complicated in dressage is that you need a creative and sensitive touch to feel things. Dressage is a bit of a dance. [...] And, in general, women have more, the, have more patience to do it because well training a horse takes more time than teaching it to jump, what. [...] And generally speaking, women are, more likely to do that. [...] – Dressage rider, woman.

Especially in the level of competition, again, we are not going to make generalisations because there is a bit of everything, there is everything, everywhere. But it is true that, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the time in any case, what I observe in my clientele and what I have been able to observe in my private lessons, is that, frankly, it is that women are more sensitive to cuddling their horses a little bit and to considering them as their baby, what? [...] – Sales representative for a saddler, woman.

[...] Afterwards, to get there in that world, it is true that it can be easier because it is really a very, very difficult world and a woman has perhaps more, more difficulty to be strong and to get used to that world [...] – Jumping rider, man.

Women are perceived in the equestrian world as they are in society in general at this point. It is the same with men and the image they may have in the business world.

However, as we can see below, this can be countered by the fact that horse girls are very strong in character and fight to achieve their own goals.

[...] Yes, after the women who arrive at the high level are women, really with, with a little more character. [...] Well, for example, Lisa, will tell you too, she had a teacher [...], it is Florinne who was a vet and... I advise you to interview her, if you have the opportunity to do so, I think it could be very interesting because she is a woman who has, who has, who arrived from very little, she was a veterinarian and she arrived at a very high level and she sold a lot of horses, she had two horses that made the Olympic Games and American, so, it could be quite interesting to discuss with her and she is really a woman of character. [...] And for me, women who reach the top level are women who have a lot of character. The ones I know, in any case, who are at a high level, have a lot of character. – Sales representative for a saddler, man.

At the psychological level, we found that women are generally perceived as emotional, gentle, and more focused on the relationship with the horse. As a result, they are better suitable for dressage competitions. In contrast, men are seen as careerists, better able to handle pressure and more competitive. Nevertheless, in reality, horse girls are strong women who fight to achieve their goals.

Thirdly, the family aspect is different between women and men, such as in society, in general. From the analysis of the interviews, we can see that women's roles are to raise children as well as dealing with the household tasks. However, apart from the norms set by society, they have the will to take care of their children and have a family life. Here are statements from two women who work in the equestrian sector:

[...] The woman, she has ..., she still, she still has to make sure that her house is clean, she has to raise the children, she has to do the shopping, cook... It is not the worries that men have. – Stable manager, woman.

It is easier for a man to say he is not going to be around for longer than a woman who wants to be around her children a bit more, I think. – Equine physiotherapist, woman.

Specifically in the professional equestrian context, many women will tend to stop riding if their partner is not from an equestrian background. The problem concerns the fact that the partner of a female rider will not be able to keep up with her in her career. Here is an example to illustrate this idea:

[...] And then, as they grow up, girls sometimes have disillusionment or start meeting a boy who plays football. And she gives up horse riding a little because she has her boyfriend.
– Jumping rider, man.

But on the other hand, afterwards I had, let me cut you off, two other partners, but again where, um, with the first one it was over because the professional life was much too, much too invasive, it was, well, he did not accept it. And with my second partner, well, I was the one who said “stop” because, at that time my professional life was too important and he wanted more and I could not give him more, I did not want to stop my professional life for someone so... – Ex-jumping rider, women.

Inversely, men in the equestrian world, unlike women, are less concerned about the partner acceptance aspect of the work they do. It was noted, in fact, that a large majority of men have found a partner in this world as explained in the following interview extract:

No, I think the woman... I think almost every rider has found women who ride horses or who were in the business closely. So, it is a passion for both of them, it is easier. – Stable manager, former rider and breeder of jumping horses, women.

In addition, it was noted that the desire to have a family can be a barrier to the development of show jumping career or any other career in equestrian sports. This desire to have a family life, follows norms according to which the woman will want to have children and stay at home to educate them and at the same time take care of the household chores as well as cooking. This phenomenon affects women more than men.

It was explained by many respondents that the fact that there are fewer women than men is due to starting a family. Women would rather put their careers on hold and look after their children. Meanwhile, the man continues his career in competitions. The following two quotes illustrate these ideas:

Well, I think it is indeed a reality. There are more men in the top level than women. But I think that women, at some point, are... With children, family life and all that... Well, she must make choices. And it is much more complicated for a woman to continue at a high level and sacrifice her family than for a man. And so, I think that is why we have this kind of problem today in the top level. – Equine physiotherapist, woman.

So, it is maternal instinct that makes you put your career on hold. It has happened to me too, very clearly. We put our career on hold or our training on hold for x amount of time. It can be x years in the end because you think, 2/3 children, so you think five or six years. The career is over. That is why there are not many women in the top level beyond the age of 20, or 25. – Jumping rider, woman.

The career break stop can also be caused by fear. Women may fall, get seriously injured and not be able to look after their children properly or leave them without a mother as explained below in these two short extracts:

But it is because there are also pregnancies, there is, children and a lot of women drop out at that time, actually. They get the fear of accidents, especially in a suit. And there are a lot of them who do not go back to the top level, in fact, often. – Eventing rider, woman.

I have seen a lot yes because often women do not really jump at a high level anymore because it is very high and dangerous and there are a lot of risks, a lot more risks than dressage. This means that women jump at the beginning of their career but afterwards, they do less because they have children and therefore take fewer risks. This means that there are fewer women at the top level in jumping. – Jumping rider, woman.

The extract from the interviews above gives another reason why dressage is perceived as more feminine: it is less risky than show jumping and therefore more reassuring for women.

The opinion that women must stop their career to educate children is shared by both women and men. A feeling of normality is perceived on the part of men who find it normal to be more absent than women. Here is an explication by a male rider jumping rider:

At the top level, that is not why you find men. As I say, they have children and you must know how to reconcile life as a woman, a mother, a wife, and a rider. And it is not easy, especially at the highest level. They leave on Wednesday until Sunday. They are home on

Monday and Tuesday. It is not much of a family life for a mother. If there are small children, it is not easy. – Jumping rider, man.

However, one participant experienced this aspect of his family. He still made the choice to pursue his career rather than devote more time to his children and his partner. Here is the testimony of a male rider:

But it cost me my housework. [...] Because of the time it took, it took all my time. I was reproached with things like “we do not go on holiday”. My children are the same. I will say, my son does not talk to me anymore because it was “yes, always the ponies, the ponies”. – Jumping rider, man.

In spite of this, some women testify to the possibility of continuing to ride and perform despite the arrival of a child. It is all a question of organisation and acceptance by the family. However, it is certain that family life will not be equivalent to the image that society still gives at present: the mother looking after her children. Moreover, this work is time-consuming and does not always allow for time off, for holidays, as a normal family might do. It is necessary to take care of horses seven days a week and 24 hours a day. Here are the experiences of three interviews:

Yes, for me it is easy because it is a that is it. My life here before anything else. But now, everyone fits in very well, has found their place. But it is clear that it is a job seven days a week. So, we do not have a classic family life, that is for sure. We do not have the possibility... We do not have holidays; we do not have holidays. We take a week's holiday when everything is going well and then that is it. But there was acceptance from my family. The descendants plus my partner. – Jumping rider, woman.

Ah, he [the baby] was bathed in it, I always did it according to him and, I adjusted, a little bit my work but I put him in the baby carrier, I put him, well I managed; anyway, he was with me, what have you. – Jumping rider, woman.

This life choice has an impact on the career itself but also on the financing of the career. The idea that the woman will want to have a normal family life puts a brake on sponsorship opportunities.

I think a man is perhaps more credible to a sponsor because once he has gone down that road, there is nothing that can stop him. Women, if they want a family life, they still have

to be pregnant. So, at some point in a woman's career, if she wants to have a normal life, there is a point in her career where she will have to stop for a while. And for the sponsors, and for the owners, and for everything, it's perhaps easier with a man. – Stable manager, former rider and breeder, woman.

According to the interviews, the family aspect is completely different for women and men. Women's roles are to bring up children and do household chores. Therefore, it is difficult for them to develop and pursue their riding career. A large majority of female riders who become mothers stop their career due to lack of time or fear of injury. Men, on the other hand, are not concerned with these aspects and are therefore freer.

Finally, speakers do not attach much importance to these gender norms. According to the results, many female and male riders prefer to be themselves, they do not want to show or hide any female and/or male traits. Hermine, a female eventer, said that the equestrian world is a hard and physical world, women cannot be feminine, they are more like tomboys as cited by a woman:

[...]We are not very feminine in the equestrian world. [...] We are girl, tomboy, what. —Event rider, woman.

However, this view from above is not shared by some interveners. According to them, some women like to accentuate their side by putting on a feminine accessory when they ride, by taking care of themselves like a person who works in the office or by putting on make-up.

I am thinking of a typical lady who is an instructor, it is funny, she is an instructor, she has her own stable, so she has a few horses of her own, she does her own boxes, she wears make-up, there you go all the time, she has huge nails and everything, well, she passes like that in the world of horses, I think she passes quite well. Well, it is not my style at all, I wear my boots, and, in the summer, I wear my shorts, it is more each one has its own personality but there is no, um, there is no one model to have, you know. – Jumping rider, woman.

Some interviewees say that each gender has a part of the opposite gender when it comes to riding: men can be softer while women are tougher psychologically.

Men have a feminine side that comes out when they are on horseback, and conversely, women have this little masculine side that comes out when they are on horseback. In both

directions, it balances the scales and women are still tough... Are tougher, for me, than men.

Psychologically. – Jumping rider, man.

Nevertheless, not all women and men fit simultaneously into society's conception of gender norms: for example, some women will mount on strong, and some men will mount on soft. It is important not to make generalisations. Here are some illustrations from interviewees:

Well, once again, it depends on the person because there are women who are very stiff on horseback and who will make the horse stiff, there are men who will be more supple than some women, there are men who will be harder, honestly, it is true that we tend to say that men are harder and that, as a result, it is a bit complicated to get a horse back after them. But it is still difficult to, to put everyone in the same bag. - Dressage rider, woman.

Yes... No, in terms of the difference a little bit it depends, it is a question of feeling, everyone has a very different feeling, whether you are a man or a woman, I think that at that level, I will say, there are, there are men who will ride hard as women will want to ride hard. Men who will want to ride more gently, very much in tune with the horse and women as well.

I mean, from the outside, I have seen men riding with strength more often than women in general, but otherwise, yes, there are, there are often differences. There are often differences, yes. - Sales Representative at a saddler, woman.

According to the results of the interviews, there is no gender aspect determining accessibility to the profession but rather a performance aspect. As the equestrian world is physically and psychologically hard, it is complicated to demonstrate one's femininity, although some women manage to keep some of it. In addition, as a rider, it is important for men to have a feminine side that allows them to ride better. The same is true for women who need to have some masculinity. Finally, gender characteristics can also vary from person to person: women may be stronger mentally than men and some women may be stronger physically than some men.

To conclude, we pointed out that the principal gender norm in show jumping is the fact that women desire to have a family life, and more specifically becoming a mother. This can also constitute an obstacle to women in their career development. Moreover, we have seen that women are perceived as less strong and more sensitive, both mentally and physically than men. However, these standards can be counterbalanced and do not represent a general truth. Finally, we have observed that dressage is perceived as a female discipline because it requires qualities

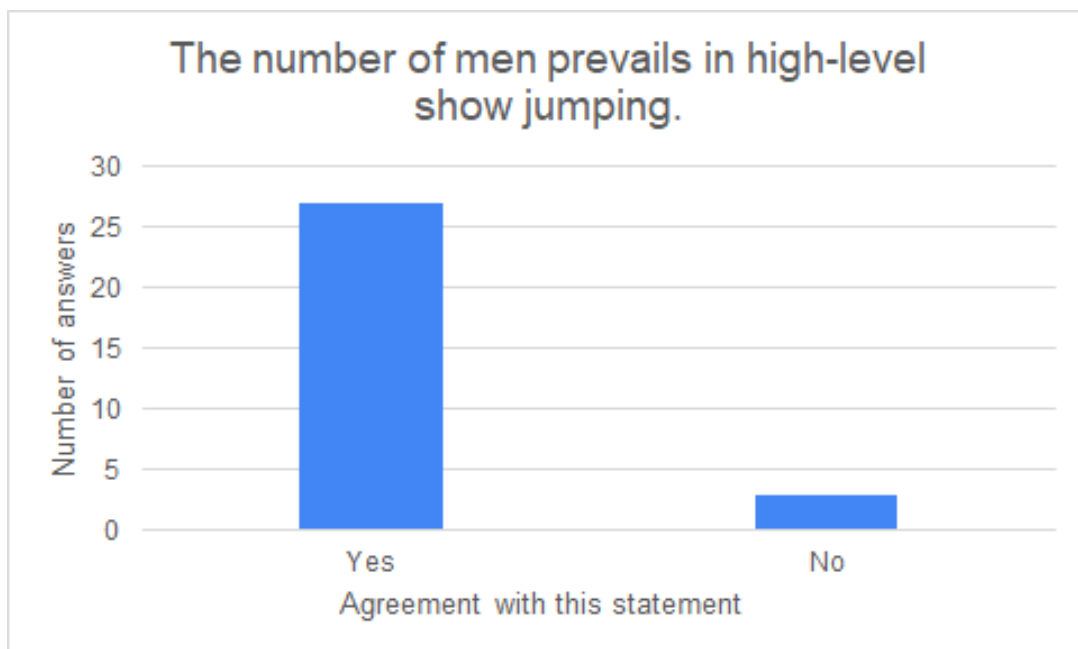
that are associated with women and is an artistic discipline that is less risky. For these reasons, the dressage is of less interest to male riders.

4.2. How do equine professionals perceive gender integration in show jumping?

The way in which gender integration is perceived by male and female riders and other professionals in the equestrian world is an important piece of data in order to understand the reality of the field. This perception can have an impact on the equality of opportunity for each gender, and we therefore want to understand the reality of gender mainstreaming in professional jumping.

Firstly, the graph below shows the proportion of participants who agree or disagree with the fact that there are more male than female riders in high levels show jumping. 27 out of 30 respondents agreed that high-level show jumping is dominated by men. Although this is starting to change and there are more and more women in show jumping events. Two respondents have not been included in this graph because they did not express a clear opinion on this issue.

Graph 1: The number of men prevails in high-level show level.



Below are excerpts from interviews that confirm these statements:

In the high level, yes. Yes, that is right. It is certain that when you get to the heights like that, well, you do not see many women, because, first of all, you are ... You are not 1m45 or 1m50 when you are 18 years old. – Stable Manager, woman

Well, yes, because when I was little, we used to go to competitions. There were many more girls. Then there were boys too. I cannot tell you the ratio of girls to boys. I know there were a lot of girls. When you go on the rides, at the very small level, when you start, there are a lot of girls. And afterwards, there are many, many more men. It is a hard sport. Physically, it is hard. Even mentally, psychologically, it is hard. That is why, I think, there are more men.
– Jumping rider, man

From these excerpts from the interviews, we observe that there are more women in the amateur level than men, but their numbers decrease once the level of the courses increases.

Nevertheless, as we can see below, only three respondents claim the opposite: there are more women than men in show jumping at the top level. Here are two examples from our interviews that confirm this statement:

Not really. Not really because I have a lot of girls in the events every time I go to the shows and even a little bit everywhere, when we go to the stables, in the riding schools, etc., it is many, many girls. – Jumping rider, woman.

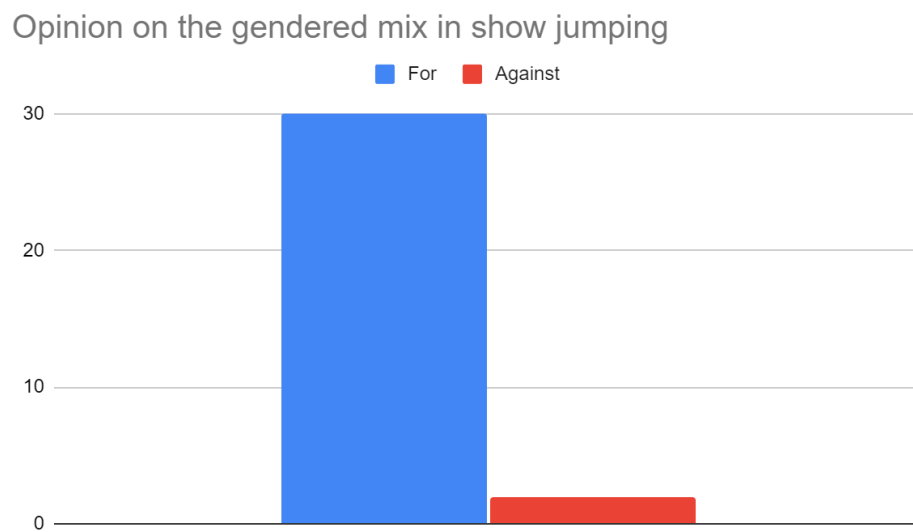
I more or less agree, but I think it is changing. In the past, competitions were at 1.60 m or higher and the obstacles were heavy. The horses were big and strong with hard mouths. Now the competitions are more and more technical. The jumping equipment is lighter. As a result, the horses have evolved to be more like blood horses. – Breeder, man.

From the graph above, which we made on the basis of our interviews, we can see that the majority of respondents agree that show jumping at a high level is dominated by men. One of the reasons for this is the fact that high-level show jumping is very difficult on a physical and psychological level. This is too demanding for women, whereas men are more resistant. Later in this part of the research we will observe other factors that explain the reason why there are more men than women in high-level show jumping and how women are integrated into this environment. Nevertheless, some argue that this is beginning to change and that show jumping is becoming more feminine. One jumper also said that she finds that there are more women than

men in the competitions she attends. This is due to the fact that she competes in 120 cm competitions, whereas the number of men prevails at 1m40-1m60 competitions.

Secondly, we asked the participants what they thought about the mix of equestrian sports. According to the graph below, most respondents find this mix normal and appreciate it.

Graph 2: Opinion on the gendered mix in show jumping



They think that the gender diversity in the equestrian sports is normal because no one gender has the advantage over the other. It is all about feeling and a woman can be just as performant as a man and vice versa. In addition, it is also the horse that is of great importance in the performance. Here are three quotes that mention this idea:

I think it is normal because at the end of the day you do not know how to be better as a man or a woman. I think that... We are used to having mixed events. I do not see why we should now have events... – Jumping rider, woman.

We are more physical, but it is also fine. It is a question of feeling. And I do not think you can differentiate that feeling. You cannot say that a woman has more feelings than a man. It has nothing to do with that. I think a man can have it as well. – Jumping rider, woman.

I think it is quite normal because it is really the quality of the horse that will make the difference. A rider without a horse is a pedestrian, so there you go. So, there is no gender in this. – Jumping rider, woman.

Moreover, one can feel a certain pride on the part of these people that their sport is one of the only mixed sports at the Olympic Games and at a high level in general. Being part of one of the only sports that allows this gender integration is a form of privilege. Here are the words of two women working in the horse world who mention this:

I think it is good. Nowadays, as a woman, we always advocate equality between men and women. Today, as we said at the beginning of the interview, well, it is one of the only sports where gender equality is still... End. [...] Is topical, that is it. So, I think it is good. And even if we do not ride the same horses, the quality of the horses is there. And we can... Yes, we can compete with men. – Equine physiotherapist, woman.

Excellent, I am very proud to be part of, this sport. We are going to ...; actually, we can be competitive to a man, or a man can be competitive to a woman. – Dressage rider, woman.

In addition, this pride can also be associated with a challenge. Some women like to compete with men. They like the challenge. Here are the views of two speakers:

If, on top of that, we are lucky enough to have the only, almost Olympic, sport where we fight on equal terms. First of all, I am a bit of a feminist at heart. So, I like to compete against men, I think it is great. And it is very good. It is positive. – Dressage rider, woman.

But I think that as women, we like it. I like to go to events where there are men too. I have beaten men before and it is a bit of a challenge too. – Jumping rider, woman.

The vast majority of the women are happy with the gender integration in equestrian sports, whether it is out of pride or challenge. They feel equal to men. However, two women prefer segregated jumping courses. They think that it is difficult to compete with men because the top level is more demanding for women than for men. Women have, as well, less time to train because family life is time consuming. Here are two extracts from interviews that explain this idea:

There are fewer women, so it means that women survive less in it because, fighting against men is quite difficult because again, there are more men who are good at high levels. So, I think it could be good to make more events or competitions where it can be divided. That way, it will attract a few more women to go to the top level. – Jumping rider, woman.

Mum will not be there, she will not be able to do everything she does whereas men, they do everything all the time, they still have this chance. The fact that they are men and do not have these women's tasks, I am sorry to say, but that is the way it is, they have got more time to ride ... And so, it is inevitably unfair. – Stable manager, woman.

Thirdly, this acceptance of gender integration can be explained by the fact that women and men are equally capable of being an excellent rider. No one gender is expected to be a better rider or have an advantage over another. Men tend to be seen as better performers, simply because there are more men than women in high levels show jumping. According to the interviewees, to develop one's equestrian career certain psychological and physical qualities are essential. According to one sport horse breeder, the large number of men present is the reason why there are more men in the top 10:

No, performance does not vary by gender. If the top 10 is more male, it is only because there are more men competing. – Breeder, man.

Once the topics of gender prevalence in high-level show jumping and the respondents' views on the gender mix of equestrian sports have been addressed, we will explain the psychological and physical skills of an excellent rider. The objectives were to understand which kinds of qualities are required to develop the career of a professional rider and to understand this gender mix in equestrian sports.

Jumping, and even horse riding in general, is a sport that depends heavily on the mind. As a matter of fact, the speakers point out that the important features are to have a strong mindset that will allow them not to give up at the slightest problem and allow them to perform under pressure. Here are two extracts which confirm this statement:

I would say being very strong mentally. To be able to ... perform under pressure, that's something that I think is very difficult. – Jumping rider, woman.

I think you have to have a very strong mind when you are a top-level rider because when you go out on the track you must not let yourself be taken by emotions. Sometimes the

times that have been better, the number of bars that have fallen or not and all that... So, you have to stay calm and try to ride as well as possible and get the best results. – Equine physiotherapist, woman.

This mindset must also be completed by features such as patience, rigour and accuracy which are important qualities to become an excellent rider.

I would say patience, accuracy, rigour, and respect. For me, these are the first psychological values of a rider. – Representative of a saddlery brand, woman.

Be very disciplined. Never give up, that is a very, very important thing. Keep going, even if it is not going well, keep going. A lot of patience. Yes, that is it. Discipline and patience. – Jumping rider, woman.

Concerning the physical features, the rider should have a good physical condition, a muscular and a “light” body as well as energy to hold a horse efficiently as well as to overcome obstacles. According to the statements of our respondents, to achieve this, a balanced diet and physical preparation are important.

[...] Physically it is clear that, the weight plays a role, we hold our horses better when we are physically, I do not want to say “within the norm” but, it is when we have a little too much weight, it is true that we have a little more difficulty and we put the horse in difficulty too with, when he takes, end when he jumps. If we have weight, we put him in difficulty. – Jumping rider, woman.

Ah, well, horse riding is a sport, so you need to be in good physical condition. — Jumping rider, woman.

[...] I think that we, riders underestimate a little bit too much, what is physical preparation. [...] I think that behind a footballer, there is a whole physical preparation. They train every day, every day they go to the gym, every day they go, ..., They go to prepare, and they go to train and there are physical trainers, physiotherapists behind them and all that. Afterwards, I think that we have such a life, where we do not count our hours, where we do not have enough time, that we underestimate that a lot and I think that physically, there is no one who is more capable. I think that there are some very strong riders who ride very light and who manage to ignore their weight and that it does not change anything, just as there are tall, thin riders who are at the same level. I think that it does not change much, I think that...

The main thing is that you should not underestimate the physical preparation, I am followed by a physiotherapist every two days... – Jumping rider, man.

We have seen that to become a performant rider, the essential psychological qualities are patience, rigour, and accuracy. Concerning the physical qualities, a good physical condition, energy as well as a muscular and light body are essential in order to be able to stand well on the horse and easily overcome obstacles. According to these statements, these qualities are not gender-specific but can be present or developed in both men and women. Therefore, given this, there is no reason why one gender should be privileged.

However, other than these traits, the factors that really help launch a professional jumping career at a high level are above all: money, luck, the right follow-up, and a good horse. Here are some examples from the interviews that confirm this assertion:

It was just the difference between people who make it and people who do not, for example, you can have a person who works very hard and does not make it to the top and a person who works a lot less hard than they do and makes it, so I will explain to you it is just one thing, it is the money. – Jumping rider, woman.

Actually, for me, ok, the fact that it is framed, the fact that it is going, that you find “the right coach” especially, the fact that you have a good horse, and you have the opportunity, that the parents understand, it’s what because it is time consuming, it is ... especially because it costs a lot of money. – Jumping rider, woman.

[...]Luck. [...] You have to be, you have to get up on the right day, you have to have the right horse, at the right time, the right job and luck. – Jumping rider, woman.

[...]It is all about the work, it depends on the horse you have too. [...] It is true, because we are two athletes, it is not only the rider. You can be a good rider, but if you do not have a good horse, you will not go far. On the other hand, an average rider, if he has a good horse, will go further than the... It depends on the rider’s talent and the quality of the horse. – Jumping rider, woman.

These four factors: money, luck, the right follow-up, and a good horse are essential factors in the development of a professional rider’s career. Horse riding is indeed an expensive sport: it is necessary to take private lessons given by an efficient coach to improve oneself as well as to buy the adapted equestrian material. The right follow up is essential to develop the

skills of an excellent rider and to be guided along the career path. It is important to have a good horse as it is the horse that clears the high hurdles. Luck, on the other hand, is the key to all these factors: you must be at the right time, in the right place with the right people.

To continue, despite the assertion that both genders are equally capable of developing their careers in high-level jumping and that the following means are needed to develop the career of the top professional rider, we observed differences in roles, physical and psychological traits that vary between the genders. The analysis of these gender differences allows us to observe which gender leads to becoming a better rider in order to find out if the mix of equestrian sports does not favour one gender over another.

Biologically, men and women show considerable differences in strength, genitalia, pelvic size, leg position, etc. Women are at a disadvantage because of certain biological traits: for example, large breasts or rounder hips. Nevertheless, in the majority of the answers (only one respondent clearly stated that at high-level horses are ridden in strength) we observed that men's physiognomy is not predisposed to horse handling. Furthermore, each horse needs a different method of training and is adapted to the rider. Finally, external aids, such as good rider equipment, ensure that all riders have equal opportunity to achieve the same results. Here is an excerpt from the interviews that confirms these statements:

[...]No, not at all, not at all because then we do not put, women riders who also ride at a high level, I think that at this level, no, as I was saying, it remains questions of, of equestrian sciences that a rider, a small rider of small size with less strength than a man who will measure twice as much as her, and in size and in weight, from outside aids we can arrive at quite the same result. – Sales representative for a saddler, woman.

Although there are morphological sex differences (for example, men are stronger and women have larger breasts), one gender is not favoured over another. The horse and riding equipment are, in fact, adapted to each rider. Therefore, all riders have the opportunity to achieve the same results. This leads us to state that no gender is bound to be a better rider.

In terms of psychological aspects and roles in society, men are better at handling pressure than women, which is essential to cope with the difficulty of the high-level equestrian world. Men are also freer as they do not have the responsibilities of running the house, getting pregnant and raising children. As a result, women face more barriers to career development than men.

Fourthly, from our previous analyses of the physical characteristics of an excellent rider, we have observed that no one gender has an advantage over the other. Once we are aware of this, we will now explain how women are considered in show jumping. According to the results of the interview, some of the interviewees stated that in general women are well regarded, that they have not witnessed any form of discrimination against women and that there are no gender notions in the world of high-level equestrianism, what counts is performance and results. However, as in everyday life, some men can be more macho towards women. Therefore, women have to be temperamental in order not to be crushed.

Most respondents have not witnessed any form of discrimination against women. According to them, there are no gender notions in the world of high-level equestrianism, what counts is performance and results. However, as in everyday life, some men can be more macho towards women. Therefore, women must be temperamental in order not to be crushed. Here are excerpts from interviews that confirm this:

[...] No, I do not think it is like for all sports, it is from the moment you shine, it is from the moment, in fact, of following this infernal rhythm of competition I mean, we, there I think it is a question of performance. [...] No sex for me. No, not anymore, it is become very democratic, there have been a lot of changes in the last few years, I mean in the last 10, 20 years, there have been quite a few... 10, 15 years, quite a few changes. – Sales representative of a saddlery company, woman.

[...] Honestly, I never had any problem. I have, I have not had, I have not been abused, I have not had, I have not been denigrated. Everything is going well for me! – Dressage rider, woman.

No, I would not say that a woman has to work harder than a man. But a woman has to have character, she has to know what she wants and not let herself be crushed by potential men who might think that they could do it more easily because there is not this family life to put aside or to organise or things like that. – Equine physiotherapist, woman.

While others argue that discrimination against women is present, that men are superior and say derogatory things about women, that it is men who are in leadership positions and that women have to work harder than men at the beginning of their careers to prove their credibility. Here are some examples of interviews that confirm these statements:

Sometimes I think so. It depends on what environment you work in. But yes, I think so. There are stables where there are more male riders who might laugh at the women (in the sense of laughing at the women). Well, laughing is a bit of a mouthful. But yes, I think so. –

Jumping rider, woman.

We had an owner who told me that I ride like a woman. So, should I take it positively or negatively? It's still a form of discrimination. –

Jumping rider, woman.

[...]Yes, there are assholes everywhere who say this horse is too strong for a woman, but it is a minority in the equestrian world. —

Jumping rider, man.

[...] At the beginning, maybe. [...] Yes but I mean, a prejudice not, not especially related to the equestrian world, I think, there. [...] Well, I am not going to ... If you also want to be the head of a company, of a big company, if it is a woman, we are going to trust her less than if you have five workers and whether you are a man or a woman it is the same. If you compete at the provincial level, whether you are a man or a woman, it is the same. If you really want to stand out, well yes, it is still not gender equality, I think we are far from it. –

Jumping rider, woman.

[...]Oh, yes! Especially at my place at the stable. Some representatives who come and say, 'Here, we would like to talk to the boss.' [...] And so I explain to them, and I say, "Listen, I am the boss." "No, no, I want to talk to, Mr., Mr. Boss". And so, I had to really explain that "well there is no Mr. Boss, I am at home, and I am the boss. So, if you want to sell your product, it is me you want to talk to, you have to talk to me or leave my property." –

Dressage rider, woman.

Because... In the equestrian leadership, there are many more men than women. Even if Princess Aya was president of the federation, she was not the one pulling the strings. It is a man's world. –

Stable Manager, woman.

Recently, I did a training session and there was a coach who was there to coach us with the Belgian team. And I did very, very well and someone, a man, phoned this coach and said that I did not have the mental capacity to win in competitions. –

[...] Yes, sometimes men say, "Yes, I can ride it better than you because I am stronger." [...] Yes, we know that it exists. Afterwards, it does not affect me. And in a way, I say to myself "Yes, he is not wrong", you know. It was not said in a mean way, but I have

been told, “Yes, you are a woman, you are small, you have no strength. You would not know how to do it. I can do it better.” – Jumping rider, woman.

Despite the fact that many respondents stated that they had not experienced discrimination against women in the world of high-level equestrianism and that women had equal opportunities to develop their careers as professional riders, derogatory comments against women did exist. Women must therefore have a strong character in order not to be crushed by the male gender.

Fifth, we will address the access to resources such as sponsorship, media representation, owners, and money for women.

With regard to sponsors, it was mentioned earlier that the maternity aspect could be a problem for them. They are afraid that the woman will not survive at a high level, as said by a female jumping rider:

In general, I find that a woman, if she wants to survive in the equestrian world, she must already be very, very good. A man can be average. That attracts more sponsors. The sponsors wonder whether a woman will survive at the top level or not. They think that she is less likely to survive. – Jumping rider, woman.

However, in further discussion, interviewees felt that sponsors were more likely to be attracted to women than to men. It is true that there are more men sponsored, but this is simply because more men are moving up to a higher level.

So, I think, at the equestrian level, actually, it will really depend on the level of the rider. And as we said, statistically speaking, there are always more men than women, so inevitably you end up with a lot more men sponsored at a high level than women. Simply because, for me, we do not have, as many women as men at that level. But as a brand, we have a large share of the market, we are even the leader in terms of sponsorship and marketing, we have an essential role in the competition, I think, and frankly, whether it is a woman or a man, we will do exactly the same thing and we will offer the same conditions, and we will look for a woman who performs well and makes you want to be followed as much as a man. – Representative of a saddlery brand, woman.

Some people even think that some sponsors will be more interested in working with women riders because they will attract more female consumers. The equestrian world at the

amateur level is, in fact, predominantly composed of women. Here is an extract from the interviews which confirms this idea:

Since equestrian sports, in any case, are equal for both men and women. Sponsors are attracted to both. And I even think that they would be more favourable towards women because in leisure riding, there are many more women who ride. And so, all the advertising and all that, in order to sell, is going to be much more focused on women than on men. – Jumping rider, woman.

The opinion of the sponsors is therefore mixed. Some people think that it is advantageous to be a woman and others think the opposite.

Concerning the media, the visibility of women is noted as identical to men. This is because what counts for them is the result and not the gender of the person. However, it is clear that at present they talk more about men than women because of the quota of the latter at the top level. Here is the opinion of a speaker:

We talk more often about men because there are more men at high levels but that does not mean that they focus more on men than on women at high levels. They focus mainly on sports results, so, whether it is men or women, there is no particular difference, but as there are more men at a high level, we talk more often about men than about women. – Representative of a saddlery brand, man.

Regarding access to horses and therefore the choice of riders by owners, a large majority of women felt a preference for men. Owners would have more confidence in male riders:

What people think, etc. But I know that he has an easier time... In the end, the owners are more likely to go to him in the sense that they will be more confident at first to put their horses with him because he is a man than with me because she is a woman. And we have already had many... Several owners who have... Who had trouble with a woman riding their horses? – Jumping rider, woman.

However, this female view is counterbalanced by a male view that women and men have equal access to horses. The important thing then is to find the right person outside of the gender of the person.

So, I think that owners go to the person who is best suited to their horse and who will put it on the highest value. Maybe one rider will put more value on one horse than another, sometimes it is even the riders themselves who take off for the pleasure of changing horses, you know. – Representative of a saddlery brand, man.

A second counterbalance may be provided by a great idea present in the equestrian world. Which is that a horse ridden by a woman will always be easier. This leads to a greater interest in horses ridden by female riders by potential buyers. They think that a man will be able to ride these horses if a woman can do it. This leads owners who want to market their horses to turn to women. Here are two quotes representing this idea:

And, in terms of horses, there are those who will quickly say that a girl is more commercial than a boy. Because... As morals are still like that, they will say, “Ah, a horse with a girl will always be easier.” And then a boy will always be able to do better. So, there is this level that is different. – Jumping rider, woman.

Commercially speaking yes. Potential buyers will most certainly go faster to a horse ridden by a woman than a horse ridden by a man because people think that horses ridden by women are easier than those ridden by men. At least the performance horses. – Jumping rider, woman.

This idea in the horse world is due to the fact that women are considered less strong and generally smaller.

It is much more... It is a crazy thing. You see, at the stables, there is Paul there too. And he has horses. And he often asks me to get on them to make a video because it is much more commercial. Because I seem to be small, to have no strength. Because if you know it is a man, you think, “Ah, he is much stronger, and he will be better at jumping the horse.” Whereas, if the horse jumps well with her, it is because he is good. Because I use less artifice than a man maybe. – Jumping rider, woman.

A more discriminating aspect such as the woman's physique was noted because it attracts the eye.

They always say that selling a horse, putting a pretty girl on it who rides well, that it will be more easily sold than a... – Breeder, woman.

Being a woman can therefore be both an advantage and a disadvantage. In some aspects, indeed, women are better valued than men, while in others, the opposite is true. So, there is no general truth.

Concerning the access to money, the riders are mostly self-employed, so they set their own salaries. Their remuneration varies according to the infrastructure they have at their disposal and their reputation. Riding schools hire riders according to their ability to meet the requirements of the job, not according to gender. However, what may vary are the benefits in kind given to riders, the salary set by the stables and the position held (the salary of a stable manager will be much higher than the salary of a groom). At competition level, a prize will be awarded to the winner and will not vary according to gender. Riders receive the majority of their remuneration from riding lessons given, horses trained for their clients, and sponsorship. Nevertheless, it is difficult to have a legitimate opinion about the remuneration of riders as many aspects are not declared in the equestrian world. Here are some extracts from the interviews that confirm these statements:

[...] It is, it is very difficult because the statutes, the legal statutes, it is still very limited, what. How many people work illegally in the horse industry, there are the majority of illegally employed people in the horse industry. And those who work for what salary, well ... well, that is not going to be done here, it is not, it is not the thing, but I can do it for hours, it is shameful, shameful, shameful. You can do anything in the horse world. – Jumping rider, woman.

[...] No, there are not really differences in wages. The differences in salary are at the level of the different positions. There is not stable manager, whether he is male, or female is going to earn the same, a house rider is going to earn the same, but it depends on the stable in question and it is quite complicated, because each, each stable pays differently and will bring different things so. End in different things but it is not going to, in general it is just the same pay for the same job. A house rider whether it is a man, or a woman will earn the same. What depends sometimes is the, the benefits in kind apart from the salary which are the horse box, a flat or that kind of thing. In concrete terms, the salaries are the same for a groom, I will take an example, two examples of big stables that I know very well [...] so, the salary was the same for the grooms. [...] With an annual increase like in any company, like any business.

But there is no difference in salary between men and women. – Sales representative for a saddler, man.

[...] I have no idea because it will depend, in fact, on a lot and a lot of sponsoring that we can have. It also depends on, the basic capital you have because, well, horse riding is still a more expensive sport, so if you do not have the infrastructure and the basic capital, to at least continue, it is very complicated, so I think it is relatively. I will say independent to each person, in fact, the basic capital or the capital that the person knows how to produce, by managing his or her business, um, as well as possible. So, for me there are no differences at that level, between men and women. —Sales representative for a saddler, woman.

To conclude, our results are mixed, on the one hand, the respondents say that women are included in show jumping and they do not feel that they are disadvantaged to men. On the other hand, some speakers claim that discrimination against women exists.

4.3. Conclusion

The aim of our master thesis is to analyse gender differences in show jumping, we asked ourselves two questions that became the basis of our research. These questions are: (1) “*Which gender norms are prevalent in show jumping?*” (2) “*How do equine professionals perceive gender integration in show jumping?*” We have decided to focus on these issues because we believe they allow us to assess gender equality in the world of jumping at the professional level.

We were able to note through the answers to these questions, that the world of high-level jumping remains more difficult to access for women. Indeed, there are more male riders than female riders in this field. First of all, the idea that women’s desire to have a family life is a brake on their career development. When they become pregnant, they are forced to stop training and competing for at least nine months. Secondly, their careers must be put aside so that they can concentrate on raising their children. The majority of women stop their career after giving birth to their child because of the fear of injury and therefore not being able to take care of them and/or for lack of time. Whereas the majority of men are not affected by these aspects, they are free and can therefore focus more on their careers. This difference leads to the woman receiving fewer sponsorship offers. However, this idea is not conveyed by all because sponsorship can be linked to marketing which would make women more interesting for sponsor in this field because they have more opportunities to reach the target audience being composed of a majority of women. To continue, women encounter pejorative remarks, such as “horses are too strong for women” or “if a woman can ride a horse, everyone can”. Therefore, in order not to be crushed by the male gender, women must have a strong character.

Despite the existence of such discrimination against women, we should not generalise. Most of our respondents did not encounter any form of discrimination against women and the women themselves claim to be well integrated into the show jumping world. The only barrier that fully prevents women from developing their careers is family life.

5. Discussion

5.1. Results discussion

Through the results we have obtained, we can see that the main statement reported in the literature review is true: there are more men than women riding at high levels in show jumping while at amateur level the trend is reversed. The speakers explained that there are many more young girls riding than boys. As they grow older, the respondents note that women tend to stop riding because of their private lives, friends, and boyfriends, while men continue to develop their sporting skills. According to the literature review, this is due to the fact that women are more interested in the relational aspect of riding, whereas men perceive riding purely as a sport. Exceptions exist, of course, there are men who prefer to have a strong relationship with horses than to compete and there are women who have a strong interest in competition. Nevertheless, the analysis of the interviews does not confirm this statement. It is true that many respondents stated that women have a better relationship with their horse, but this is not a justification for the fact that the high-level equestrian world is perceived as masculine and the amateur level as feminine.

The main reason we have identified during the literature review and during the analysis of the interview results that can explain this phenomenon is the woman's desire to have a family life. Women must, indeed, stop their career for at least nine months because they become pregnant. This has an impact on the continuity of their career as they no longer have the opportunity to participate in competitions, to achieve results and therefore to gain points for the international ranking. This also has an impact on the income generated. After the pregnancy, they feel obliged to cut down considerably on competitions and training in order to raise their children. In addition, the idea of getting injured is something that scares them because it means that they can no longer take care of their children. Men, on the other hand, are freer, and do not face this kind of problem, as child-raising and housework are not part of their daily routine. They can therefore develop their career while having a family life, although it will be restricted by the time their job requires. The results show, indeed, that men are very often absent because of the competition, especially when they go abroad. It is therefore essential, if the man is a professional rider, to have someone to look after the children at home. However, the analysis of the results shows that some men find themselves confronted with this problem and this can obviously have an impact on their life as a couple and/or family. Furthermore, the speakers did not hesitate to mention that it is even more difficult for a woman to evolve in the horse world

if her partner does not support her. A person who is not involved in the equestrian world will not be able to understand why it is essential to devote so much time to a horse. There are, however, some women who manage to continue their career while having a family life. Nevertheless, they are rare; these female riders already have their own infrastructure and are supported by their partner, who usually also works with horses, and/or their family.

To pursue, we have observed through the literature review and the analysis of the interview results that there are indeed gender inequalities in show jumping, despite the fact that men and women compete together, in the same equestrian courses and at the same level. According to the literature review, men are privileged and more visible because they are perceived by sponsors and owners as mentally tougher, more ambitious and perform better than women. As for the media, they pay little attention to women riders and through this they convey a gendered image of women riders. Firstly, they perceive a woman rider as a traditional woman, who takes care of her children and her horses. Secondly, they highlight their gender, not their performance. Thirdly, magazines and newspapers that cover equestrian topics portray women riders as beautiful, made-up women who always dress stylishly for riding. However, the results of the interviews only partly support these statements. It is true that some sponsors are reluctant to work with female riders because they think that they will not be able to compete at a high level for a long time, either psychologically or physically. As already stated in the analysis, women are perceived by some to be less strong and less resistant to pressure than men. Moreover, according to one interviewee, most sponsors are men and therefore they prefer to collaborate with men. Conversely, many interviewees believe that sponsors are just as interested in working with women as with men, as they pay more attention to the results of competitions and the visibility of riders on social networks than to gender. Some of them will even be more interested in working with a female rider because she can attract more potential clients than a male. As a matter of fact, leisure riding includes more women than men, so sponsors can reach these customers through female riders. The same applies to equestrian equipment, as more women than men value equestrian equipment, sponsors will prefer female riders to present their products. We have also observed that sponsors seem to be more attracted to working with men simply because there are more men than women rising to the top. Regarding horse owners, we observed that some of them will indeed have a preference for men. Female owners may also be jealous of female riders and entrust their horse to a man when it is better suited to a woman. Despite these statements, most owners value the results and the feeling between rider and horse over the gender of the person. In addition to this, many owners turn to a woman for commercial

purposes: a horse ridden by a woman seems easier to hold. Customers think that if a woman can ride the horse, then a man will be just as capable. However, this statement carries a discriminatory connotation as it underestimates the performance of women compared to men. Regarding the media, most respondents say that women receive as much visibility as men. Once again, they put more emphasis on the results than on the gender of the rider. We have the impression that we see more men than women on television because the majority of riders are men.

Through our dissertation, we have seen that gender inequalities also exist between riders and can occur on the part of the coach. During the writing of the literature review, we have observed that some women face sexual harassment from their coaches or male riders. To continue, the literature review highlights the fact that women riders encounter derogatory comments within the equestrian world as it is a male-dominated world. Female riders are, in fact, called tomboys, lesbians and bitchy as they have to adopt so-called male characteristics and can be temperamental and cold in order to focus on their goals. During the interviews, none of the respondents mentioned the subject of sexual abuse. We therefore do not know the real extent of this phenomenon in the equestrian world. As for discrimination against women, some respondents told us that they had already been confronted with derogatory remarks simply because they were women. However, many respondents contradicted this statement, as women do not necessarily feel discriminated against in this respect and men do not feel that this exists. Women feel fulfilled and remain themselves, although sometimes they only hide their lack of strength. Most respondents, both men and women, said they were proud of the fact that equestrian sports were mixed. A few of them mentioned the fact that the mixed nature of events puts women at a disadvantage, as men have more time to devote to training and competition than women.

Following this revelation, we can nevertheless note that it is a fact that women and men do not have the same physics. In the literature review, we saw that women have a body that is not adapted to sport because of body fat, heart capacity... However, in terms of horsemanship, what is most noticeable is the lack of strength, sheathing and therefore muscle. Another major main problem is the size of the breast that impacts the mobility and the comfort of the women. Nevertheless, despite this, the physiognomy of men is not better adapted to the management of the horse. As we have already observed, there are finer horses suitable for less strong people and some suitable for stronger people, regardless of sex or gender of the rider. Therefore, every rider has the opportunity to achieve the best results with the help of external aids, such as the

right equipment and a good horse. To reinforce this, our field research shows that the psychological and physical qualities of an excellent rider are not gender specific but can be developed by each individual.

In addition to the qualities of the riders, we have observed in the literature review as well as in the analysis of the interview results that financial means are essential to develop the career of a high-level rider. Since horse riding is a very expensive sport and to become an excellent rider, it is necessary to take many lessons and to be supervised by a renowned coach. The analysis of the results completes this, revealing that luck, a good follow-up and a good horse are essential to develop the career of a top rider.

In conclusion, we state that gender inequalities exist in equestrian sports, more specifically in high-level show jumping. Therefore, we cannot talk about gender mainstreaming despite the gender mix in equestrian events. Nevertheless, the literature review and the analysis of the interview results do not perceive these gender differences in the same way. The literature review highlights the presence of discrimination against women and the barriers faced by them in developing their careers as professional riders. While the analysis of the interview results nuances its statements. Of course, there are points where women are disadvantaged and there are discriminatory statements to them. However, these forms of discrimination are similar to those encountered in everyday life where men are sometimes more advantaged than women. On the other hand, many women said that they were well integrated and fulfilled in the equestrian world. Moreover, this world is interested in the performance and results achieved by the riders, so it is not a question of gender. Most of the respondents also claimed to be proud of this gender mix in equestrian sports. Despite these discrepancies between the literature review and the analysis of the results, we have observed that they share commonalities regarding the need for financial means and the family aspect that strongly influence the development of a professional riding career. Given that women have to take care of the education of their children and the management of the household, the family aspect is therefore a real brake on the development of women's careers as well as being an important factor in the inequalities between men and women encountered in high-level equestrian sports.

5.2. Limits of this research

Throughout the writing of our thesis, we may have encountered some difficulties.

On the one hand, for certain themes, we had difficulty in finding adequate scientific documents given that little research had been carried out on the equestrian world. In order to gather relevant information, we therefore relied on the few existing scientific articles but also on press articles reporting the current reality. Nevertheless, some subjects such as access to money and riders' salaries remained unresolved because we could not find any source on them.

On the other hand, we have encountered obstacles in the search for professional riders who would be willing to answer our questions. Firstly, many of the riders we contacted did not respond to our request for an interview. Secondly, many riders were very busy and could not make time for our research. Thirdly, some riders scheduled an interview with us but did not show up in the end. These were hard times for us but in the end, we managed to interview 32 people. Nevertheless, in order to do this, we had to interview riders who do not necessarily compete at a high level but are, in any case, all professionals but for some, in young horses or in national and, for the most part, at 1-, 2- or 3-stars level in international.

5.3. Solutions

In this section we will propose some solutions to the inequalities encountered between women and men in the show jumping world.

First of all, we suggest organising special competitions for women in order to create a spirit of support among women and to promote equal gender opportunities in show jumping at the highest-level world. By having the opportunity to participate in women's events, female riders would be recognised for their performance and would come out of the shadow of male riders. Gender-segregated equestrian competitions would also be more equal for women. In our research we have observed that women have less time to compete and train than men, as they are responsible for raising their children and for household chores.

Secondly, as we see above, family life and childcare pose a real problem for women in their career development. It is also the main factor that puts women at a disadvantage compared to men. That is why we propose to introduce childcare for women riders' children during competitions. With this new concept, women riders would be able to participate in competitions as much as men, as the problem of childcare would be solved.

Finally, the last solution we thought would be to create associations of women riders whose main objective would be to promote the visibility of women riders. These associations would ensure that the qualities and performances of women riders are highlighted. For example, by publicising the results achieved by women riders at events or by sharing positive testimonials from sponsors and owners who work with women. This would give more recognition to the performance of women riders.

In conclusion, we are aware that these three solutions will not completely solve the problems of gender inequality in the world of high-level show jumping. Nevertheless, we believe that these solutions could be a first step towards equal opportunities for both genders in show jumping.

5.4. Directions for future research

As a result of our research, we have been led to reflect on other topics on the gender context in jumping, especially at high levels.

First of all, one of the limitations we have encountered was the lack of information on the equality of wages between men and women. However, salary is an important KPI that allows us to easily account for women opportunities in the business world. It could therefore be interesting to study the salaries of male and female riders, quantitatively and/or qualitatively, in order to reflect this reality.

Secondly, we were able to identify that one needs to have money or financial support to be able to start a riding career. We therefore believe that a study of a person's social status could link their chances of developing their career with the money available to them, according to their social class.

In conclusion, based on our analysis, we believe that the directions for future research should be oriented towards the wages received by male and female riders and the financial means of riders.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this master thesis has confirmed that there is a difference in the number of participants between women and men in the horse world, more precisely in show jumping of the highest level. In childhood and adolescence, there are certainly more girls than boys. However, in adulthood and especially at the professional level, there are far more men than women. This is the case for jumping and eventing. However, this is not the case for dressage. This can be represented by the participation rate in the Olympic Games. As a matter of fact, the participants of the Olympic Games that took place in Rio de Janeiro in 2016 and in Tokyo in 2021, confirm the fact that show jumping, and eventing are dominated by men, while dressage has more female athletes than male athletes. Moreover, we have observed that the proportion of women riders participating in the Olympic Games has decreased in all disciplines compared to the proportion of men riders participating.

This difference in numbers between women and men can be largely explained by the willingness to find a family. The biological aspect is very important for the woman as she will have to carry the child if she decides to have one with her partner. She will have to stop her sport and therefore her career or potential career in jumping, or any other discipline. Once the child is born, societal norms lead the woman to take more care of him. It can be noted that she places this aspect as a primary concern and is therefore afraid of injury and not being able to cope with this task. This is why women either stop riding or turn to dressage. Men, on the other hand, can continue their careers. It is therefore normal to find more men than women at the highest level. This aspect also impacts on the interest of sponsors and horse owners. A woman, indeed, who has not yet had children is likely to stop her career at any time and this is a disincentive for these two speakers to give their confidence to women.

However, this problem of numbers does not reflect the feeling of integration of women in this sport and in this professional world. In fact, we have noted that women feel well accepted as riders and have the possibility of having as good a career if they wish. The vast majority of riders believe that women are not at a disadvantage compared to men, both in terms of physical strength, muscle for example, and mental strength. Although this feeling is shared, it may be interesting to note some points of discrimination for women. Nevertheless, women are perceived differently than men in terms of the provision of horses. On the one hand, it is better perceived because in the sale of horses, it is very pushy and commercial because the animal

will be perceived as easier to ride and it is more pleasant to watch a woman riding. On the other hand, it is possible that she may not have access to the horses because the owners think that she will be less efficient due to lack of strength, for example.

Finally, we can conclude that women deserve their place as much as men in the professional world. The most crucial aspect of her career is the foundation of a family, which will force her to stop. The norm that women have to take care of children is still a strong pressure in this sector today and can therefore be an obstacle to perfect equality between men and women in top-level jumping.

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8. Appendix

8.1. Assessment grid

Master thesis assessment grid

Student's last name and first name:

	--	-	+	++	Remarks
Competence No. 7 "Project management"					
Timeliness (defense in June)					
Initiative capability and degree of student autonomy					
Competence No. 2 "Knowledge and reasoning"					
Innovative aspect (managerial and / or scientific originality)					
Ability to mobilize concepts and relevant literature to address the problem					
Competence No. 3 "A scientific and systematic approach"					
Clarity of presentation of the problem and / or hypotheses					
Scientific rigor of the methods used					
Balance, articulation and overall consistency of the work					
Quality and relevance of references					
Relevance of conclusions and managerial implications					
Competence No. 1 "Corporate citizenship"					
Ability to produce a societal reflection (intellectual independence, critical and reflective view of managerial practices)					
Competence No. 8 "Communication and interpersonal skills"					
Synthesis ability					
Compliance with the formal rules of presentation					
Quality of writing text (style, spelling, syntax)					
Competence No. 9 "Personal and professional development"					
Total investment of the student					
Appreciation of this master thesis before the oral defense	/ 20				
Competence No. 8 "Communication and interpersonal skills"					
Oral synthesis ability					
Compliance with the formal rules of oral presentation					
Appreciation of the oral defense					
Global appreciation of the master thesis	/ 20				

This grid is indicative of the competencies expected in the master thesis.
Source: https://www.uclouvain.be/cps/ucl/doc/iag/images/competency_en.pdf
The weights between the criteria, however, are left to the discretion of the jury.

Check one of four boxes of the scale with reference to the following assessment code. -- = Absent or poorly realized criterion (a "weak point" of this thesis); - = Badly or insufficiently realized criterion; + = Well done criterion; ++ = Very well done criterion (a "highlight" of this thesis that makes recommended reading).

Each member of the jury gives this page to the thesis promoter who keeps them for any subsequent feedback.

Abstract:

The main objective of this master thesis is to find out the equality in equestrian sport at the professional level, and more specifically in show jumping, a discipline marked by formal gender integration (i.e. men and women competing together) since 1964. To analyse this, our research is based on a qualitative study with 32 interviews with male and female riders and professionals from the equestrian world. In order to interpret and analyse the results, we will focus on the perceived psychological and physical differences between male and female riders and the opportunities that these two genders feel they have to develop their careers as professional riders. We will also look at the gender norms present in this community. However, it is important to take into account that our small-scale empirical study does not offer a representative inquiry into the reality of the entire equestrian world, but rather is an explorative starting point into perceptions of gender (in) equality by a limited sample. Since equestrian sports are one of the few sports that are not formally segregated by gender, we believe that it is an ideal context to study (subtle processes of) (in) equality.

UNIVERSITÉ CATHOLIQUE DE LOUVAIN
Louvain School of Management

Place des Doyens, 1 bte L2.01.01, 1348 Louvain-la-Neuve
Boulevard Emile Devreux 6, 6000 Charleroi, Belgique
Chaussée de Binche 151, 7000 Mons, Belgique
www.uclouvain.be/lsm