

***Open section: A Look at some Issues
and Considerations About Gender***

Emanuela Bonini

University of Genoa

Editorial

This number of *AG - About Gender* is totally dedicated to articles submitted to the journal's *open section*. This choice comes, on the one hand, from the need to give space to the many articles which could not be published in the *AG - About Gender* numbers based on thematic calls; on the other hand, it appeared to the Editorial Board as an opportunity to take a look at the typologies of contents and scholars' articles presented to our Journal. Using these articles to *create* a Journal number means giving evidence not only of the interest *AG - About Gender* has aroused in scholars belonging to different areas and identities but also of our Journal's dedication to designing a *space of attention* around issues and approaches still having relatively low visibility in the Italian academic – and sometimes not only – discussion.

In coherence with the Journal's delicate and continuous focus on the definition of interests, points of view, disciplinary perspectives, fundamental and unavoidable

themes, widely and less recognized approaches, the articles presented here cover for us imperative questions – both old and new - which adopt *gender* as a historical analysis category (Scott, 1986). In this vision, gender is assumed not only as opposed to biological sex – which dichotomizes the look and the possible construction of subjectivities – but also as a representation and *mise-en-scene* (Butler, 1990) of norms and assumptions which tend to establish monolithic subjectivities. *Reading* social phenomena through a gender dimension emphasizing *lens* gives new meaning to our sight as well as to our interpretative and founding categories.

The eleven articles of this number confirm these visions and *working* perspectives through both some recurrences and some originality in the choice of the issues tackled. In fact, the question of social inequalities in labour markets men-women relations is back again as well as that of violence, *real* or at a symbolic level, produced by the tensions characterizing men-women relations themselves; also the question of prostitution as a cultural construction element returns together with the issue of homophobic prejudice shaping. In addition, the articles propose *new* considerations about maternity and its actual perspectives; on the applicability of *Intersectional Theory* in gender and urban space relation; on femininity and its identity-related re-definition and re-positioning.

Going through a very quick review of the articles, Debusscher presents a historical definition of gender equality in European policies with a critical position about the subordination to economics these policies continue to have in a crisis period in which the cost of gender equality supporting policies seems *too* heavy to bear for EU Member States.

The results of the SHARE survey (Survey of Health and Retirement in Europe) are discussed by Crespi (and others)¹ with a comparison of the working pathways of retired women in Italy and Spain. Results show that women have shorter careers than men and that their careers are very frequently interrupted which determines a further gender inequality effect at the end of their working life (thus confirming Debusscher's considerations about gender equality European policies).

¹ The other authors are: Maria Letizia Zanier, Claudia Santoni, Alessandra Fermani, Lucia D'Ambrosi

Work-life balance related issues return in a survey focused on small and medium enterprise (SME) practices where Mattioli and Rinaldini highlight the role of local *balancing* culture. They show how organizational practices supporting female workers may have an impact on individual time management, on “missing work-life balance” related stress and on the appreciation of *grass-rooted* support to work-life balance policies.

Spanò’s article explores the *worlds* and the histories of Italy’s and Great Britain’s universities’ leading women, going through their myths and narration metaphors considered as self-representations of *feminine self*. She therefore proposes a journey through personal histories, leadership models, career and survival strategies, opinions (of themselves and of others) and difficulties.

The four articles exploring working women’s conditions deal with crucial questions concerning men-women substantial inequalities and related policy ineffectiveness, also underlying the inadequacy of formally recognized rights in modifying social contexts. Contents but also methodological issues are covered, such as in Aureli’s article which highlights the potential of *biographies* in Anti-violence Centres. In particular, the author uses a narrative approach to *read* the violence “collected” in Anti-violence Centres and the women’s life-histories become both an internally working and sharing instrument and an external awareness rising leverage.

Margaggia, by herself, describes how advertising campaigns represent male violence against women, which communication strategies are used and their effectiveness and ability (or in-ability) to put male and heterosexual norm at the core of the public discourse (a necessary *passage* to avoid the reproduction of gender stereotypes).

The two articles on gender violence underline in a mirror and somehow complementary way how fundamental it is - in different forms, moments and contexts – to give voice to both the parts involved in violence (male and female) in order to set up an effective public awareness rising intervention.

The heterosexual construction of gender identity is analyzed, with different perspectives, by two articles. On the one hand, Saitta offers a reconstruction of prostitution’s cultural role as a key-issue, in public policies and discourses, both to observe social changes and to produce (social) transformations. On the other hand,

Mauceri examines some aspects of heterosexual construction of gender identity through an analysis of adolescents' homophobia generative mechanisms, giving evidence of the existing connections between gender identity construction and the hostility towards gay males and lesbians. The reflection of Ottaviano is about maternity social construction. She proposes a *non-mother* based reflection on norms, pressures and feminine naturalization role of some key-features linked to maternity reaching the conclusion that *releasing* care from biological maternity process would allow us to recognize to *all* human beings (and not specifically to women) the capability of taking care of someone and of preparing, on this issue, the ground for more egalitarian societies.

Finally, the number closes with two articles dealing with theoretical questions although able to support design and implementation of gender issue interventions. Angelucci offers an analysis of a journey through *Intersectionality theory* together with an operational definition of this approach aimed at allowing a joint reading of gender and urban space categories. In this way, she opens up a new perspective on contemporary urban fabric as well as on gender and identity construction processes. In the last article, Mossali proposes an itinerary between essentialism and culturalism in order to re-think femininity as a possibility, in definitional terms as well as in their possible versions. For the author, (feminine) identity construction will have to necessarily pass through the claim of the right to everybody's own singularity – to be guaranteed not only to biologically female subjects – so as to make it possible to work for a *brave* choice in proposing as embodiment of disobedience towards social roles and masks.

Enjoy your reading.