

CAN GIRLS AND BOYS FEEL AND DO WHAT THEY WANT?

THE CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER IDENTITY IN HISTORY, PEDAGOGY, AND SOCIOLOGY

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In 1973, the pedagogist Elena Gianini Belotti, based on her long and in-depth educational experience with parents and preschool children, asserted in her groundbreaking work titled *Little girls* that the traditional differences in character and behavior between males and females were not primarily due to innate or “natural” factors. Rather, they are depend on social and cultural conditioning, stereotypes, and prejudices that individuals experience

during their development and upbringing: «among these also the “myth” of “natural” male superiority as opposed to the equally “innate” female inferiority». The author argued that «there are no ‘masculine’ qualities and ‘feminine’ qualities, only ‘human qualities’»; thus, the goal «is not to educate girls to become the exact copies of their male counterparts but to enable each individual to develop in a way that is most congenial to them, regardless of their gender». Despite significant advancements in gender equality over the past fifty years, this book continues to be relevant and timely. In the last decade, partly due to the impetus of the so-called Istanbul Convention (2011), initiatives in schools aimed at educating on differences and gender relationships consciously targeted at dismantling stereotypes, promoting equality and respect, and preventing gender-based violence, have intensified and multiplied (Gamberi, Maio, Selmi, 2010; Ghigi, 2019). However, a binary and hierarchical gender culture rooted in patriarchy and essentialism still persists: criticized by Gianini Belotti and by feminist thinkers who preceded her (Cavarero and Restaino, 2002; Facchi, 2013), this culture is difficult to eliminate from educational practices and socialization processes, with ongoing implications in terms of stereotypes, prejudices, discrimination, and violence. The history of women and gender, often originating from feminist perspectives, now emphasizes the historical and socio-cultural nature of power imbalances between men and women, the marginalization of women in many areas – including education and work – and the historical and social construction of male and female identities in relation to each other (Selvatici, 2010). Even recent sociological and pedagogical theories and research highlight the cultural and educational conditioning during the process of gender socialization (Abbatecola e Stagi, 2017; Biemmi, 2010; Biemmi e Leonelli, 2016; Olivieri, 1995): however, they also acknowledge the agency of girls and boys in reinterpreting and negotiating the cultural models they are exposed to within their families and schools (Connell, 2011; Corsaro, 2012; Thorne, 1993).

This special issue aims to rekindle the dialogue among scholars of feminism, gender history, pedagogy, history of education, gender studies, and sociology of education, to reflect on both changes and continuities in gender

education and socialization, fifty years after the publication of Gianini Belotti's work. Therefore, we invite contributions from the fields of history, sociology, and pedagogy that address these topics (the list is not exhaustive):

- The legacy of Elena Gianini Belotti's thinking and that of the feminists who preceded her, regarding educational practices and family socialization.
- The contributions of gender studies to understanding constructed differences and inequalities and, consequently, to gender socialization and education.
- The contribution of pedagogy, including from a historical perspective, for a critical approach to traditional gender education and its reconfiguration.
- How biological determinism, processes of naturalizing gender differences, and heteronormativity continue to impact educational practices and socialization.
- The dialogue between history, pedagogy, and sociology to promote a plural and equal gender culture from early childhood.

HOW TO SUBMIT AN ARTICLE

Authors can submit abstracts and articles in Italian, English, French, or Spanish. Articles will undergo a double-blind peer review process and should have a length of between 35,000 and 55,000 characters (including spaces), following the editorial guidelines and author instructions provided [here](#). Abstracts and articles should be sent to the following email address: redazione.diacronie@studistorici.com. Please send an abstract of a maximum of 1500 characters (including spaces) by **April 15, 2024**; acceptance or rejection of proposals will be communicated by **April 30, 2024**. The deadline for submitting articles is **June 30, 2024**. The journal issue will be published in **December 2024**. For any additional information, you can write to the following address: redazione.diacronie@studistorici.com.

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